JOSEPH FOUCHÉ

THE PORTRAIT OF A POLITICIAN

Other works by Stefan Zweig

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ADEPTS IN SELF-PORTRAITURE

CASANOVA · STENDHAL · TOLSTOY

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BALZAC · DICKENS · DOSTOEFFSKY

CONFLICTS

(SHORT STORIES)

VOLPONE

(A PLAY ADAPTED FROM BEN JONSON)

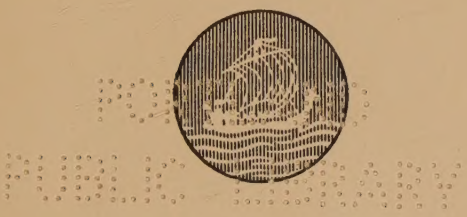
JEREMIAH

(A PLAY)

JOSEPH FOUCHÉ

THE PORTRAIT OF A POLITICIAN

STEFAN ZWEIG



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TO

ARTHUR SCHNITZLER

WITH AFFECTIONATE ADMIRATION

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INTRODUCTION

Joseph Fouché, one of the most powerful men of his day, and one of the most remarkable men of all time, was little loved by his contemporaries and has received even less justice from posterity. Napoleon in St. Helena; Robespierre at the Jacobin Club; Carnot, Barras, and Talleyrand in their memoirs; the French historians, no matter whether royalist, republican, or Bonapartist—one and all spit venom as soon as his name comes up for discussion. He is a "born traitor," a "pitiful intriguer," a "man with a slimy reptilian nature," a "professional turncoat," a "creature with the base spirit of a policeman," a "contemptible immoralist." No term of abuse is spared him; and neither Lamartine nor Michelet nor Louis Blanc makes any serious endeavour to throw light on his character, or (which would be more to the point) to analyse the springs of his amazingly persistent lack of character—his unfailing want of principle. The first effective presentation of his personality is to be found in Louis Madelin's monumental biography, from which I myself like most other writers on Fouché have mainly drawn for my facts. In general, however, we find that this man who during one of the most salient periods in history was a leader of every party in turn and was unique in surviving the destruction of them all, this man who in duels upon the psychological plane was able to get the

better of a Napoleon and a Robespierre, is tacitly relegated to the back rows among the supers instead of being given his proper place in the centre of the stage.

Now and then he is introduced into a Napoleonic play or a Napoleonic operetta, usually in the hackneyed rôle of the crafty Minister of Police, a sort of forerunner of Sherlock Holmes—for crude draughtsmanship always confuses an inconspicuous part with a subordinate one.

Only one imaginative writer has seen this unique figure in its true proportions—Balzac, whose own greatness made it easy for him to recognize greatness in another. His comprehensive and at the same time penetrating genius, which enabled him to look behind the scenes as well as to contemplate what was presented to the spectators, unhesitatingly selected Fouché as, psychologically speaking, the most interesting person of the revolutionary and Napoleonic drama. Being accustomed, in his chemistry of the feelings, to regard all the passions, those styled heroic and those styled base, as elements of equal value; being wont to admire a finished criminal such as Vautrin no less ardently than a moral genius such as Louis Lambert; totally unconcerned whether an action was "good" or "bad"; content to register the potency of the doer's will and the intensity of his emotions—it was only natural that Balzac should be attracted by Fouché, and should drag out from the shadows in which Fouché preferred to lurk this most despised and scorned among the men of the revolutionary and imperial epoch.

He speaks of Fouché as "the only real minister of State" that Napoleon had among his servants. Fouché,

he says, "is the ablest man I have ever come across." Again, he declares that Fouché "is one of those persons who have so many aspects, and so much depth beneath each aspect, that they are inscrutable in the moment of action and only become comprehensible long after the event." This puts a very different complexion on the man than that put on him by the moralists who can only breathe contempt!

Once more, in *Une ténébreuse affaire*, Balzac devotes a whole page to this "sombre, profound, and extraordinary man, whom few people really know." Here he writes: "This remarkable genius which inspired in Napoleon something closely akin to terror, did not manifest itself all at once in Fouché. An obscure member of the National Convention, one of the most exceptional men of his day and one of the most misconstrued, he was moulded in the storms that were then raging. Under the Directory, he rose to that height from which men of discernment, thanks to their knowledge of the past, are able to foresee the future; then, all in a moment, like a second-rate actor who becomes first-rate when enlightened by a sudden gleam, he manifested his ability during the swift revolution of the Eighteenth Brumaire. Pallid of visage, trained in monastic dissimulation, aware of the secrets of the men of the Mountain to whose group he had belonged, and of those of the royalists whose group he was ultimately to join, he had been slowly and silently studying the personalities, the things, and the interests on the political stage; he divined Bonaparte's secrets, and gave the Corsican useful advice and valu-

able information. At this time neither his former colleagues nor his new ones had any inkling of the scope of his genius, which was purely ministerial, essentially governmental, accurate in all its forecasts, and incredibly shrewd."

Thus wrote Balzac. It was his enthusiastic characterization that first directed my attention to Fouché, and for years I have been from time to time interested in one of whom Balzac said: "He had more power over men than even Napoleon." But posthumously, even as when he was alive, Fouché has retained the art of concealment. He is equally unwilling to let you scan his face and look over his shoulder at his cards. Almost always, amid the tumult of events and the clamour of parties, Fouché's activities, concealed by the anonymity of office, are as inconspicuous and as silent as that of the mainspring in a watch. Rarely do we catch a glimpse of his elusive profile. And there is something yet more strange than rarity about the glimpses we do catch! They do not tally, they do not seem to belong to the same person. It is hard to realize that one and the same individual, a man with the same skin and hair, was in 1790 a priestly schoolmaster, and by 1792 already a plunderer of the Church; was in 1793 a communist, five years later a multimillionaire, and ten years after that Duke of Otranto. But the more audacious I found his transformations, the more interesting to me became the character (or, once again, the lack of character) of this most perfect Machiavel of modern times; the more stimulating was his artfully concealed political life, the more did his figure loom unique and

daimonic. Thus it was that, quite unexpectedly, and enthralled by a purely scientific delight, I found myself engaged in writing the story of Joseph Fouché as a contribution to a branch of biology hitherto unstudied but imperatively needed—the biology of diplomatists, who form a little understood but extremely dangerous variety of our human kind.

Such a biography of a thoroughly amoral personality, even though it be one so peculiar and so important as Joseph Fouché's, runs counter, I know, to the unmistakable wishes of our time. What people want nowadays are heroic biographies; for our age, being so poor in politically creative leadership, seeks inspiration in the past. Not for a moment do I wish to underrate the importance of heroic biographies, to make light of their power to broaden the mind, to fortify the energies, and to uplift the spirit. Since the days of Plutarch, they have been indispensable to every rising generation, to each recurring cycle of new youth. But where our understanding of political life is concerned they have a dangerous tendency to falsify history, for it is doubtful whether persons of a dominant type are always and everywhere the makers of human destiny. Indubitably the hero, by the mere fact of his existence, controls the life of ideas for decades and even for centuries; but only the life of ideas. In the concrete realm, in the world of material realities, in the domain of political power, the pre-eminent figures, the men of ideas, rarely decide the issues. In that realm, in that world, in that domain, issues are chiefly decided (and let this be a warning against

political credulity!) by persons of a far less valuable but more dexterous type—inconspicuous agents, moles who work beneath the surface of things. Alike in 1914 and in 1918 we learned to our cost that the issues of the war and the peace, issues of far-reaching historical significance, were not the outcome of exceptional intelligence and a high sense of responsibility, but were determined by obscure individuals of questionable character and endowed with little understanding. Again and again, since then, it has become apparent that in the equivocal and often rascally game of politics, to which with touching faith the nations continue to entrust their children and their future, the winners are not men of wide moral grasp and firm conviction, but those professional gamesters whom we style diplomatists—glib talkers with light fingers and a cold heart.

If it be true, as Napoleon declared more than a century ago, that politics must be regarded as "la fatalité moderne," as the new impersonation of destiny, then in self-defence we must try to recognize the men who are the makers of this "fatality" and thus to unriddle the perilous mystery of their power. This biography of Joseph Fouché is a contribution to the typology of the politician.

Salzburg, Autumn 1929.

JOSEPH FOUCHÉ

CHAPTER ONE

THE ASCENT

1759 – 1793

Joseph Fouché was born in the seaport town of Nantes on May 31, 1759. His parents were seafaring folk and merchants and his ancestors had for the most part made their living on the sea; it would have seemed natural enough, therefore, if Joseph had also become a seaman, or a boat-builder. But it soon became apparent that this slightly built and lanky youth, anæmic, nervous, and of unprepossessing appearance, had no inclination for life at sea, at best a rough one, and in those days almost heroic. A mile or two from the shore, and he was already seasick; a quarter of an hour's run or a brisk game with his companions, and he was tired out. His parents were much concerned to know what they were to do with so delicate a sprig, for France in the year 1770 had little to offer as yet to a bourgeoisie which was already thoroughly awakened and which impatiently aspired to a higher position. In the law courts, in the administration, whithersoever you might turn, all the plums were reserved for the nobility; to win a place at court, a man must have a coat-of-arms, or landed property; even in the army, a bourgeois would be lucky if he could rise to a higher rank than a cor-

poral's by the time his hair was grey. In the badly managed and corrupt monarchy, the third estate could still find no opening. Can we be surprised if, twenty years later, it began to demand by force what had so long been refused to humble petitions?

Nothing remained but the Church. This ancient power, many centuries old, and enormously wiser than the dynasties, was also more democratic and more generous. It could find a place for every man of talent, and would accept even the lowliest into its invisible realm. Little Joseph had already distinguished himself by his abilities on the school benches of the Oratorians, and so they were glad, as soon as he grew up, to give him a post as teacher of mathematics and physics, as school inspector, and as prefect. Since the expulsion of the Jesuits, the Oratorians had been in charge of Catholic education throughout France, and under their wing, at the age of twenty, Joseph Fouché secured a dignified position; not a very great one, of course, nor one offering much prospect of a rise, but at any rate a school in which he could school himself, one in which while teaching he could learn.

If he were to take priestly vows, he might hope for better things, might become a reverend father, and later a bishop, or even a cardinal. But from the very earliest stages of his career it was typical of Joseph Fouché to show a disinclination to commit himself wholly and irrevocably to anyone or anything. He wears clerical dress and has a tonsure, he shares the monastic life of the other holy fathers, and throughout his ten years as an

Oratorian he is in no way distinguished either outwardly or inwardly from a priest. But he does not become ordained; he takes no vows. As throughout life, whatever may happen to be his situation, he keeps a way of retreat open, leaves himself an opportunity for a change. To the Church he will give himself only temporarily and not wholly, just as later to the revolution, the Directory, the Consulate, the Empire, or the Monarchy. Not even to God, let alone to men, will Joseph Fouché give a pledge of lifelong fidelity.

For ten years, from the time he is twenty to the time he is thirty, this staid and reserved semi-priest goes to and fro in cloisters and sits in quiet refectories. He teaches in Niort, Saumur, Vendôme, Paris, but he scarcely notices the change of habitat, for the life of a seminary teacher is as tranquil, humdrum, and inconspicuous in one town as in another, always behind silent walls, always withdrawn from the busy world. Twenty, thirty, or forty pupils to whom he must teach Latin, mathematics, and physics, sallow-faced boys clad in black whom he must take to mass and keep an eye on in the dormitory; the lonely perusal of scientific books; spare diet, poor pay; a threadbare gown; the secluded and unpretentious life of a monk. Stagnation seemingly, unreal and outside time and space, sterile and void of ambition, these ten silent and obscure years.

Nevertheless, during the ten years he spends teaching in convent schools, Joseph Fouché learns much which will in due time be useful to him as a di-

plomatist. Above all, he learns the technique of silence, the supreme art of self-concealment, the mastery of psychology. If this man throughout his life was able to keep an expressionless face even amid the storms of passion, if there is no record of his ever having shown a sign of anger or embitterment or excitement, if he was able to utter the most ordinary and the most terrible things in the same voice of toneless indifference, and if he could walk with the same unmoved and quiet tread through the palaces of the Emperor and amid a raging popular assembly—it was because he acquired these incomparable powers of self-control during the disciplined years in the refectories, because he had tamed his will in the reading of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Loyola, and had schooled his tongue in the discussions of the venerable priestly art long before he made his entry upon the world's stage. We can scarcely regard it as a chance happening that the three great diplomatists of the French revolution, Talleyrand, Sieyès, and Fouché, should have studied in the school of the Church, and should there have graduated as masters in the knowledge of human beings before coming to play their part in public life. Much though the three men's characters differ, in decisive moments the venerable tradition of the Church impressed a similarity upon them. But in Fouché's case there was superadded an iron, quasi-Spartan self-discipline, a constitutional antipathy to luxury and display, and an exceptional capacity for concealing his private life and his personal sentiments. The upshot was that these years spent by Joseph Fouché in the shadow of

the cloister were not lost. He learned an infinitude of things through being a teacher.

Cloistered from the world, strictly secluded from everyday life, this peculiarly subtle and restless spirit trained himself and acquired psychological mastery. It was a long time, doubtless, before the social storm raging in France began to make itself felt in priestly circles, but by 1788 it was violent enough to overleap the convent walls. The rights of man began to be discussed in the priestly cells of the Oratorians no less than in the freemasons' clubs. Curiosity directed these young clerics' attention to the hubbub that was going on in the bourgeois world; and curiosity likewise directed the attention of our teacher of physics and mathematics to the amazing inventions of the day, to the first balloons built by the Montgolfiers, and to the far-reaching discoveries which were being made in the fields of electricity and medicine. Priests were getting into touch with worldly intellectuals, and in Arras there now came into existence a remarkable social circle, known as the "Rosati," in which priests and laymen met on a friendly footing. Nothing particularly noteworthy seemed to take place; undistinguished burghers read poems aloud or gave lectures on literature; soldiers and civilians rubbed shoulders, and Joseph Fouché was made welcome because he could give his fellow-members a good account of the new acquirements of physical science. He sits there and listens when a captain in the engineers, Lazare Carnot by name, reads satirical verses; or when

the pale, thin-lipped lawyer Maximilien de Robespierre (in those days the future sansculotte had not yet dropped the "de") delivers a florid speech in honour of the "Rosati." For in the provinces the philosophizing eighteenth century has not yet drawn its closing breath. Monsieur de Robespierre is still writing poetry instead of death sentences; Marat, the Swiss physician, is still composing a sickly-sweet sentimental novel instead of fierce communist manifestoes; somewhere or other in the provinces, little Lieutenant Bonaparte is at work on a short story in imitation of the *Sorrows of Werther*. Though the storms are gathering, the clouds are hidden below the horizon.

But here is a strange trick of fate. The tonsured clerk strikes up a friendship with the pale, nervous, overweaningly ambitious lawyer de Robespierre. Their relations even seem in a fair way to be cemented by a marriage, for Charlotte Robespierre, Maximilien's sister, wants to deliver the Oratorian from his clerical bondage, and the whole circle is gossiping of the imminent engagement. We do not know why the affair fell through in the end, but if we did it is not unlikely that we should discover the root of the fierce enmity which subsequently raged between Robespierre and Fouché, an enmity which has become historical, and which led to a life-and-death struggle between the sometime friends. But during these days at Arras they know nothing about Jacobinism, and there is no sign of hatred. Far from it, for, when Maximilien de Robespierre is sent from Artois to the States General in Versailles to

LOUIS XVI BEFORE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FROM A PAINTING BY DOMENICO PELLEGRINI

ENGRAVED BY LUIGI SCHIAVONETTI

collaborate in drafting a new constitution for France, it is Joseph Fouché who lends the impoverished lawyer money for the journey and for the purchase of a new suit of clothes. It is, indeed, symbolical that on this occasion, as so often later, Fouché should hold the stirrup for another who is mounting to ride forth upon a career in universal history. It will be no less symbolical, when at the decisive moment, Fouché betrays his former friend and drags him out of the saddle.

Shortly after Robespierre's departure to the States General, which were to shatter all the foundations of France, the Oratorians make a little revolution of their own in Arras. The political draught has begun to blow into the refectories, and Joseph Fouché, sensitive to every current, allows the wind to fill his sail. Upon his proposal, a deputation is sent to the States General to express the priests' sympathy with the third estate. But our friend, usually so cautious, is a little premature this time. His superiors disapprove, so for a punishment (though they have no real power to punish) they transfer him to the sister institution in Nantes, to the very place where as a boy he had been grounded in the elements of science and a knowledge of mankind.

But now he is a man of experience; now his mind has matured; now he has lost all taste for teaching callow youths the multiplication table, geometry, and physics. The man with a flair for every breeze knows that a social storm is blowing athwart the country, and that politics rule the world. He, too, will become a

politician! He strips off his cassock, lets the hair grow on his tonsure, and instead of giving lessons to schoolboys, he delivers political discourses to the worthy burghers of Nantes. A club is founded (a politician's career always begins in some such talking-shop!), and within a few weeks Fouché is chairman of the "Amis de la Constitution" in Nantes. He extols progress, cautiously, as a moderate liberal only, for the political barometer of the easy-going mercantile town warns him against extremes. Nantes, where credit is essential and where people's main wish is that business should thrive, has no taste for radicalism. Furthermore, since the well-to-do citizens of the seaport have large investments in the colonies, they are essentially antagonistic to such fantastical schemes as the abolition of slavery; so Joseph Fouché promptly sends to the Convention a strongly worded memorial opposing the suspension of the slave trade, which earns him a fine wigging from Brissot, but raises his prestige in the bourgeois circles of Nantes and elsewhere. To strengthen his political position among the bourgeois (these electors of tomorrow!) he hastens to marry the daughter of a well-to-do merchant, an ugly girl but handsomely dowered. He is determined to become a thoroughgoing bourgeois without a moment's delay, since he foresees that the third estate will soon be the dominant estate of the realm.

These are but preliminaries to an aim which is soon disclosed. Directly the writs are issued for the elections to the National Convention, the sometime clerical teacher presents himself as a candidate. Now what does

every candidate do? He makes it his first business to promise the electors anything and everything. Fouché, therefore, swears to protect commerce, to defend property, to respect the laws. Inasmuch as in Nantes the wind is blowing rather from the Right than from the Left, he has much more to say about the risks of disorder than about the crimes of the old regime. In the year 1792, he is elected to the National Convention, and for a long time henceforward the deputy's tricolour cockade replaces the hidden tonsure.

At the date of his election, Joseph Fouché is thirty-two years of age. He is anything but comely. He is so lean that he looks almost like a ghost. His face is narrow, angular, and bony; extremely unpleasing. His nose is sharp; his lips, almost always closed, are thin; his eyes, beneath their heavy lids, have a fish-like aspect, and they are of a greyish-green colour resembling that of bottle-glass. Everything in his face, everything in the man, seems to lack vitality; he looks like one seen by gaslight, faded and wan. There is no sparkle in his eyes, no vigour in his movements, no steely tone in his voice. His hair is sparse and hangs in rats'-tails; his eyebrows are reddish, and barely visible; his cheeks are grey. There appears to be an insufficiency of colouring matter to give the tint of health. Though he is tough, and has unrivalled powers of work, you would think he suffered from chronic fatigue, was a convalescent from an exhausting illness.

Every one who looks at him has the same impression, that he has no red blood in his veins. Certainly he lacks

the hot blood characteristic of our species, and is a cold-blooded creature. His passions never run away with him; he does not lust after women, or hanker for the gaming-table; he drinks no wine; he is thrifty; he has no taste for active exercise; he spends his life in close rooms among mouldy documents. He never loses his temper or shows a sign of nervousness. If his thin lips give any clue to his mood, it is only by a slight smile, sometimes courteous and sometimes scornful. His blanched countenance might be a vapid mask, for it never discloses the tensions within, and never do his eyes, by any movement of their red-bordered heavy lids, disclose his intentions or the movements of his thoughts.

This invincible cold-bloodedness is also the secret of Fouché's power. His nerves do not dominate him, his senses do not lead him astray, such passions as he has gather tension and discharge behind the impenetrable wall of his brain. While giving his own energies free play, he remains on the alert to watch for others' mistakes, he allows others' passions to spend themselves, waiting patiently until they have spent themselves, or until lack of control has led to the exposure of some weak point; when that happens, he is ruthless in taking advantage of it. Terrible is the superiority which patience gives to this man with no nerves. One who can wait as he can and at the same time hide himself, can deceive the most practiced adversary. Fouché will play a servile part tranquilly; without moving an eyelash, he will calmly and smilingly accept the grossest affronts and the most shameful humiliations. No threat, and no

burst of passion will disturb his fish-like nature. Both Robespierre and Napoleon beat as vainly against this stony repose as water washes against a rock. Three generations of passion flow and ebb around him while he remains stubbornly unmoved, uniquely dispassionate.

In this cold-bloodedness, we find the essence of Fouché's genius. His body neither hinders him nor sweeps him away; he is, so to say, not a participant in all this turmoil of the spirit. His blood, his senses, his soul, the turbulently confusing affective elements of a full-blooded human being, have neither part nor lot in the activities of the secret gamester, whose whole passion is concentrated in the brain. For in truth this dry man of the writing-table has an itch for adventure, and intrigue is his passion. But he can only satisfy and enjoy that passion on the intellectual side; and nothing provides better concealment for his sinister delight in confusion and intrigue than the jejune behaviour of the dutiful and straightforward official he invariably gives himself out to be. To sit in his own office spinning threads, entrenched behind documents and registers, while, unexpected and unnoticed, he is making murderous onslaughts—such is his tactic. We have to delve into the underworld of history if, amid the glare of the revolution and the legendary light radiated by Napoleon, we are to become aware of his presence at all. The man seems so modest and so subordinate, but in reality is at work everywhere manipulating the forces of his time. He dwells in the shade for three generations, and Patroclus has long since fallen, Hector and Achilles have been many years

in the tomb, when he, the crafty Odysseus, still lives and works. His talent outsoars genius; his cold-bloodedness outlasts passion.

On the morning of September 21st, the newly elected Convention makes its entry into the hall. The affair is less formal, less impressive, than when the first Legislative Assembly had been opened three years before. At that time, there had still been a place for the King, a place of honour in the middle, a costly damask armchair embroidered with white lilies. And when Louis, the anointed, had entered, all the members of the assembly had risen respectfully to their feet and had received the monarch with acclamations. But now the royal strongholds, the Bastille and the Tuileries, have been put out of action; there is no longer a king in France; there is merely a fat man, named Louis Capet by his rough warders and judges, a powerless citizen who must while away the time as best he can in the Temple, awaiting judgment. Seven-hundred-and-fifty deputies rule in his stead, and they have made themselves at home in what used to be his house. On the wall behind the president's table are inscribed in gigantic letters the articles of the constitution (the new tables of the law) and as another mural decoration we see (ominous emblem!) the fasces of the lictors and the murderous axe.

The galleries are packed with the common people, eagerly scanning their representatives. Slowly and solemnly, the seven-hundred-and-fifty members of the

Convention file into the royal house. They are a strange agglomeration of estates and professions: briefless barristers side by side with famous philosophers; apostate priests and soldiers on half-pay; broken-down adventurers and celebrated mathematicians and writers of love poems: for in revolutionary France the mixture has been well shaken, until much of the sediment has come to the top. Now it is time to clarify the chaotic mixture.

The allotment of seats indicates a first attempt to reduce things to order. In the amphitheatre of the hall, which is so confined that hostile orators breathe in one another's faces, there are assembled the moderate, the enlightened, the careful, who comprise the "marais," the "Marsh" as these dispassionate deputies are scornfully nicknamed by their adversaries. The would-be stormers of heaven, the impatient, the radicals, occupy the highest benches, the "Mountain," whose uppermost tiers adjoin the galleries. This is likewise symbolical for it indicates that the men of the Mountain are backed up by the masses, by the people, by the proletariat.

These two powers, the Mountain and the Marsh, are balanced one against the other. Between them, the revolution ebbs and flows. For the bourgeois, for the moderate, the Republic has already been fully established by the inauguration of the constitution, by the curtailment of the power of the King and the nobles, by the granting of rights to the third estate. They would like to restrain the revolutionary currents which are still surging up from beneath; they would be content to defend their conquests. They are led by Condorcet, Roland, and

the Girondists, representatives of the intellectuals and the middle class. But the men of the Mountain want to stimulate the revolutionary current until it sweeps away every vestige of the past; Marat, Danton, and Robespierre, as leaders of the proletariat, are in favour of "la révolution intégrale," a radical revolution culminating in atheism and communism. Having overthrown the King, they wish next to overthrow the other ancient powers of the State, namely money and God. The balance inclines now towards one side and now towards the other. Should the Girondists gain the upper hand, the revolution will be frustrated, becoming liberal to begin with, and then degenerating into a conservative reaction. If the radicals conquer, they will throw everything into the maelstrom of anarchy. None of those present in the hall are hoodwinked by the solemn ceremonial of the opening hour; every one knows that a life-and-death struggle is imminent; and at this juncture, an individual deputy's position, his adhesion to the radical or to the moderate trend, is shown by the place he chooses for his seat, on the Mountain in one case and in the Marsh in the other.

Among the seven-hundred-and-fifty who thus solemnly enter the hall of the dethroned King, comes Joseph Fouché, deputy for Nantes, silent, wearing across his breast the tricolour ribbon of the representatives of the people. His tonsure has long since been overgrown with hair, and he has discarded the cassock of the priest. Like the rest, he is clad as an ordinary bourgeois.

Where will Joseph Fouché sit? Among the radicals on

the Mountain, or among the moderates down below? Joseph Fouché does not hesitate. There is only one party to which he will be true throughout his life, the stronger party, the majority. Counting heads as he walks in, he sees that at present the Girondists are the more numerous. He therefore makes his way to the lower benches, where Condorcet, Roland, and Servan are sitting, the men who will have ministerial posts to allot, who will nominate to all appointments, and will distribute the plums. He will be safer among them than on the Mountain.

But when he chances to look upwards, to those benches where the radicals are throned on high, he encounters a hostile glance. Old friend Maximilien Robespierre, the lawyer from Arras, has assembled his champions, and the man without pity, the man who prides himself on his inflexibility, the man who will never forgive vacillation or weakness, is looking down coldly and scornfully upon the opportunist. At this moment the friendship between Robespierre and Fouché comes to an end. Henceforward, at every movement and whatever he may be doing, Fouché senses in the background the critical, the ruthless observation of the eternal accuser, the inexorable puritan, and he knows he must be cautious.

He must be cautious; and, indeed, few are more cautious than he. In the reports of the sittings during the first few months, there is no mention of Joseph Fouché. While most of the members of the Convention, eager to bring their names before the public, seek every chance

of mounting the tribune, voice proposals, utter tirades, attack one another and make enemies, the deputy from Nantes never takes the floor. When his friends and electors ask him why he is so retiring, he says that an unfortunate weakness of the throat makes it difficult for him to speak in public. Nor does his silence do him any harm. At a time when every one else wants to hear himself speak, Fouché's apparent modesty makes an agreeable impression.

In reality, however, this modesty is the outcome of calculation. The ex-physicist is drafting the parallelogram of forces, he is watching the course of events, he is hesitating to define his position while the balance is still trembling. He will not take the plunge until the pointer has unmistakably inclined to one side or to the other. He must wait until the cat jumps, he must on no account be premature, he must not commit himself once for all. It is still uncertain whether the revolution will advance or retreat. A true son of his seafaring ancestry, he will not try to enter the harbour until the wind is favourable.

Besides, at Arras, when he was still dwelling behind convent walls, he had noticed how quickly a man's popularity can wane in a revolution, how readily a crowd which has been crying "Hosanna" will begin to cry "Crucify him." All, or almost all, of those who had been in the limelight during the days of the States General and of the Legislative Assembly, are today forgotten or detested. The corpse of Mirabeau, yesterday still in the Pantheon, has today been contumeliously bundled forth; Lafayette, a few short weeks ago triumphantly

acclaimed as father of his country, is now stigmatized as a traitor; Custine, Pétion, so recently the objects of universal admiration, find it necessary today to think of seeking cover. No, no, he himself must on no account come into the open too soon, must not be in a hurry to show his colours; leave that to others! Having early gained his experience, he knows that a revolution never bestows its fruits on those who begin it, but only on those who bring it to an end and are therefore in a position to seize the booty.

Our prudent friend, therefore, deliberately sits in the shade. He keeps close to the seats of the mighty, but is careful to avoid seeking for himself any obvious position of power. Instead of orating from the tribune, instead of expatiating in the press, he prefers to get himself elected to various committees, where he can gain an insight into the progress of affairs, and can even inconspicuously influence events, without being watched and without arousing enmity. Nay more, his powers of sustained and rapid work make him a favourite, and his inconspicuousness safeguards him against envy. From his study table, he can unconcernedly watch, abiding his time, while the tigers of the Mountain and the panthers of the Gironde are tearing one another to pieces, and while the outstanding personalities, the men inspired by great passions, such as Vergniaud, Condorcet, Desmoulins, Danton, Marat, and Robespierre, are hounding one another to death. He watches and waits, for he knows that not until the men of passion have destroyed one another will the hour strike for the patient and the prudent.

Never until the hurly-burly is done, never until the battle has been lost and won, will Fouché take a side.

All through life, then, Joseph Fouché's cue is to keep in the background. He wants the substance of power, but not its insignia; he wants to hold the threads in his hand, and yet never to be accountable. He wants to entrench himself behind the conspicuous leader, to urge that leader forward, and then, in the decisive moment when the leader has gone too far, Fouché will repudiate him. Such is his favourite rôle. The most finished intriguer on the political stage, he plays it in twenty different costumes, in innumerable episodes, among republicans and kings and emperors; and always with unrivalled ability.

Often he has a chance of playing a star part, and naturally he is tempted to assume the title rôle in the great game of life. But he is too prudent to give way to temptation. He knows well enough that his unhandsome visage will not show to advantage on medals; that it unfits him for popularity and display; and that no laurel crown on his brow could give him a heroic aspect. He knows that his voice, thin and weak, is good enough for whispering, for instilling suspicion, but that it could not sway the masses like that of the born orator. He knows that he is at his strongest in his study, behind closed doors, in the shade. There he can pry and investigate, and watch and take counsel, can pull strings and entangle them if he pleases, while he himself remains inscrutable and invulnerable.

Such is the ultimate secret of Joseph Fouché's power,

that, while he craves for power, for supreme power, the consciousness of possessing it is enough for him, and he does not want its trappings. Fouché is ambitious in the extreme, and yet he has no desire for fame; he is ambitious, but not vainglorious. Always and always a man of the head and not a man of the heart, he wants only the substance of power, and others may have its semblance. Another may hold the lictor's staff, carry the king's sceptre, wear the emperor's crown. Fouché cares not at all whether another is really powerful or only a man of straw; let him enjoy, if he can, the splendours and the dubious advantages of popularity. Fouché is content to have an insight into things, to influence his fellow-men, to lead the ostensible leader of the world, and, without exposing himself in person, to play the most attractive of all games, the great game of politics. While others are bound by their convictions, by their words and their deeds, he, the lover of darkness, remains free from commitments, and is thus the fixed pole in the eternal flux of events. The Girondists fall, Fouché stays; the Jacobins are hunted to their deaths, Fouché stays; the Directory, the Consulate, the Empire, the Monarchy, and then again the Empire, perish—always Fouché remains, thanks to his studied reserve, to his enduring lack of principle, to his resolute freedom from convictions.

But in the progress of the revolution, there comes a day, just one, when no vacillation can be tolerated; a day when every member of the Convention has to cast a decisive vote—January 16, 1793. The hour-hand of the

revolution points to noon, half the day is over, and inch by inch the monarchy has been bereft of its power. But King Louis XVI still lives; though a prisoner in the Temple, he still lives. The moderates had hoped that he might be allowed to run away; the radicals had secretly desired the mob to make an end of him that day when the palace was stormed. Neither of these expectations had been fulfilled. He had been humiliated, had been deprived of freedom and rank and titles, but so long as he continued to draw breath he was a hereditary monarch, a direct descendant of Louis XIV. Though he was now contemptuously styled Louis Capet, he remained a danger to the young republic. On January 15, 1793, therefore, the Convention mooted the question of his punishment, the question of his life or his death. Vainly had the waverers, the cowards, the cautious, people of Joseph Fouché's type, hoped that it would be possible in a secret ballot to escape having to declare themselves. Robespierre pitilessly insisted that every representative of the French nation should openly utter his yes or no, his decision for life or for death, in the hall of assembly, so that henceforward the people and posterity should know whether he took his stand on the Right or on the Left, whether he belonged to the ebb or to the flow of the revolution.

Fouché's attitude was already clear on January 15th. His connexion with the Girondists, and also the wishes of his electors (who were almost all of them moderates), inclined him to vote in favour of Louis. He questioned his friends, Condorcet above all, and found that without

exception they wished to avoid so irrevocable a step as the execution of the King. Finding that the majority were opposed on principle to a death sentence, Fouché naturally decided to take the same line, and on the evening of January 15th, he read his friends the draft of a speech he intended to make in support of clemency. One who sits among the moderates is surely pledged to moderate courses, and since the majority were adverse to radical measures, Joseph Fouché, the man without convictions, was likewise opposed to them.

But between the evening of January 15th and the morning of January 16th, there was a night of alarums and excursions. The radicals were not idle; they set a-going the powerful machinery of rebellion which they knew so well how to use. In the suburbs, the tocsin was sounded; the sections drummed up the crowds, the disorderly battalions of a revolt, which are always manipulated from the background by terrorists who wish to force political issues—crowds whom the master brewer Santerre could with a wave of the hand rouse to action within a few hours. Every one has heard of these battalions of suburban agitators, the market women and the adventurers; every one knows the glorious part they played in the storming of the Bastille, and every one knows the horrible part they played in the September massacres. Always when the barriers of the law are to be overthrown, this huge wave of popular feeling is stimulated, to wash everything away, including at last those who have summoned it from the depths.

By noon already huge masses have thronged round the Riding School and the Tuileries: men in shirt-sleeves brandishing pikes; loud-tongued women in bright red cardigans; the Civil Guard and the manifold ingredients of a mob. Busy everywhere are the stimulators of the uproar, Fourier, the American; Guzman, the Spaniard; Théroigne de Méricour, that hysterical caricature of a Jeanne d'Arc. On the arrival of deputies who are suspected of favouring the middle course, terms of foul abuse are volleyed at them as from a dung-cart, fists are raised threateningly, invectives fly through the air, all the forces of terrorism and intimidation are at work to make sure that the King's head shall fall into the basket of the guillotine.

Everywhere intimidation has its due effect on the faint-hearted. Those who yesterday were fully determined to vote against the King's death, in order to avoid a war to the knife with the whole of Europe, have for the most part become uneasy and disunited under the formidable pressure of the popular mood. At length, late in the evening, the names are called for the open vote, and, ironically enough, one of the first to be cited is Vergniaud, the leader of the Girondists, a glib-tongued southerner whose voice has been wont to echo from these walls. Now, being one of the leaders of the Republic, he is afraid people will not deem him republican enough if he shows a wish that the King shall live. Though usually so impetuous, so impassioned an orator, on this occasion he slowly and heavily mounts the tribune, hanging his great head in shame, and in low tones utters the words "la mort."

They resound through the hall like the note of a gong. The first of the Girondists has backed down. Most of the others stick to their guns, and three hundred of the seven hundred votes are for clemency, although the moderates know that at this juncture moderation needs a thousand times as much courage as ostensible resolution. For a long time the decision seems to hang in the balance, and only a few votes are needed to settle things one way or the other. At length comes the turn of Joseph Fouché, deputy of Nantes, the man who yesterday had assured his friends that he would make a moving speech on behalf of Louis, the man who only ten hours before had seemed the most stalwart of the stalwart. Since then, however, the ex-teacher of mathematics, Fouché the good arithmetician, has been counting noses, and has discovered that if he votes for clemency he will find himself in the wrong party, in the one party which nothing will ever induce him to join—in the minority. Quietly but swiftly, therefore, he mounts the tribune, and he, too, with pallid lips mutters the words "la mort."

In later days the Duke of Otranto will say or write a hundred thousand words in the attempt to explain away as unuttered these two words which stamp Joseph Fouché as a regicide. But the words were publicly spoken, and were recorded in the "Moniteur." They cannot be expunged from history, and they are memorable in the man's personal record. They are memorable because they mark Joseph Fouché's first public act of desertion. He has stabbed his friends Condorcet and Daunou

in the back; he has befooled and cheated them. Yet they have no reason to be ashamed, for they are in excellent company. Many others, and stronger than they, Robespierre and Carnot, Lafayette and Barras and Napoleon, the mightiest men of their day, will share the lot of the Girondists, and will find that in the hour of trial their ally has left them in the lurch.

At this juncture, moreover, we have the first disclosure of another and strongly characteristic element in Joseph Fouché's make-up—his effrontery. When he betrays his party, he does not adopt the new line slowly and cautiously; he does not make any bones about the matter. In the broad light of day, with a frosty smile, and with an amazing assumption that his conduct is to be regarded as the most natural thing in the world, he enters the camp of those who have hitherto been his adversaries, and voices all their arguments as his own. He is indifferent as to what his former associates may think of him or say about him; he cares not a jot for public opinion. His only concern is to be on the winning side. In the suddenness of his changes of front, in the infinite cynicism of his modifications of rôle, he displays an impudence which stuns us, as it were, and arouses involuntary admiration. Within four-and-twenty hours, within an hour, sometimes even within a minute, he will haul down the flag of his apparent convictions and hoist another flauntingly in its place. He does not steadfastly pursue an idea, but marches with the times, and the swifter their march the more quickly must he walk to keep up with them.

He knows that his electors in Nantes will be furious when, a day or two hence, they read in the "Moniteur" about his vote. If he cannot hope to convince them, he must try to forestall them. With one of those flashes of courage, with that brazenness which at such moments gives him the semblance of greatness, he does not wait for them to manifest their indignation, but assumes the offensive. On the very day after the vote, Fouché issues a printed manifesto in which he thunderingly proclaims as the outcome of innermost conviction a step which was really prompted by the fear of making himself unpopular in the Convention. He does not intend to leave the electors time to think things over, but tries to stampede them, to terrorize them, by a fierce onslaught.

Marat, and the other hotheads among the Jacobins, could not use more savage terms than this man who was yesterday a moderate uses when addressing the worthy bourgeois who make up his electors. He writes: "The tyrant's crimes have been obvious to all, and have filled all hearts with indignation. Unless the sword of the law quickly strikes his head from his body, the brigands and the assassins will still be able to walk with their heads erect, and society will be menaced with the most terrible disorder! . . . Time is on our side and is against that of all the kings of this world." Thus does he proclaim Louis's execution to be an imperative necessity—this man who the day before had had in his pocket a manifesto, presumably no less convincing, against the execution.

In truth, the calculations of our shrewd calculator have

been accurate. Being an opportunist, he knows the disastrous effects of cowardice; he knows that when the masses are in motion, boldness is the decisive factor in all calculations. Events show him to have been right; the worthy conservative burghers bow their heads before the storm and timidly accept this impudent and unexpected manifesto. Confused and embarrassed, they hasten to approve of a decision which really ran counter to their most heartfelt convictions. Not one of them dares to offer a word of criticism. Henceforward Joseph Fouché would always be able to make use of the powerful lever with which he was to help himself through the most difficult crises—contempt for mankind.

From this day onwards, from January 16th, until further notice, Joseph Fouché the chameleon is of a bright-red tint, the moderate having in the course of a single night become an advanced radical and an ultra-terrorist. In one bound, he has entered the camp of his opponents, there to take up a position in the extreme Left, the most radical wing. With sinister speed, this cold-blooded fellow, this sober-minded man of the study, since he must not seem backward in well-doing, adopts the most sanguinary phrases of the terrorists. He fulminates against the émigrés and against the priests; he incites to the chase, he thunders, he rages, he sounds the call to massacre. He would be glad enough to re-cement his friendship with Robespierre, and stand shoulder to shoulder with the notary from Arras. But the Incor-

ruptible, the Unbending, has no love for renegades, and the turncoat's noisy radicalism seems to him even more suspect than had been the previous lukewarmness.

Fouché, with his flair for coming weather, is sure that critical days are ahead, and feels that it will be dangerous for him to remain under Robespierre's constant supervision. The atmosphere of the assembly is stormy; fierce and tragical struggles between the leaders of the revolution, between Danton and Robespierre, between Hébert and Desmoulins, are manifestly imminent; even among the radicals he will have to make up his mind which line to take, and Fouché does not like to decide until a decision will be safe and profitable. He knows that in critical times there are situations with which a diplomatist can best deal by evading them. He makes up his mind, therefore, to quit the political arena of the Convention while the struggle is raging, and not to come back until the issues have been settled. By good luck he has a respectable pretext for departure, seeing that the Convention is going to send two hundred of its members to keep order in the provinces. Fouché who feels ill at ease in the volcanic atmosphere of the sittings, pulls strings and manages to secure appointment as one of these provincial delegates. This gives him time to draw breath. Let them fight it out meanwhile in Paris; let them destroy one another; and let the men of passion thus make room for the men of ambition! The world is racing along, so that much may happen in a few months and even in a few weeks. Maybe by the time he comes

back, a settlement will have been reached, and he can then calmly and safely espouse the cause of the victor, can join his invariable party—the majority.

In histories of the French revolution, too little attention is usually paid to what went on in the provinces. Accounts are apt to be concerned exclusively with the clockface of Paris, where alone the course of events becomes obvious. But the pendulum and the weights, on which the movement of the hands depends, are in the provinces and among the armies. Paris is spokesman, Paris takes the initiative, Paris furnishes stimuli—but the country as a whole acts, and supplies the springs of action.

The Convention was quick to recognize that the countryside was not keeping step with the capital. The people of the villages, the hamlets, and the mountain districts do not think so quickly as those of the metropolis; they are slower and far more cautious in the adoption of new ideas, and they elaborate these after a fashion of their own. What becomes law in the Convention after no more than an hour's debate, filters through into the provinces slowly and drop by drop, falsified and diluted as a rule by the royalistically inclined provincial authorities and by the clergy and other sympathizers with the old regime. Always, therefore, the agricultural districts lag behind Paris. When the Girondists are dominating the Convention, the countryside is still faithful to the monarchy; and by the time the Jacobins are triumphant in Paris, the provinces have got no further than to support the

Gironde. Strongly worded rescripts from headquarters are void of effect, for printed matter still spreads slowly in Auvergne and Vendée.

That is why the Convention decides to send spokesmen to the provinces, men who with the aid of the living word will be able to invigorate the revolution throughout France, and will hold in check the almost counter-revolutionary tendencies of the countryside. It gives wellnigh unrestricted powers to these two hundred of its own members. One who wears the tricolour baldric and the red cockade is to have dictatorial powers. He will be able to levy taxes, pass sentences, call up recruits, cashier generals; no local authority can override him, for in his sacred person he represents the will of the whole Convention. His power is to be as outstanding as that of the proconsuls in ancient Rome, who fulfilled the will of the Senate in subjugated territories—every one of them an autocrat against whose decisions there is no appeal.

Immense is the authority of these chosen envoys, but immense likewise is their responsibility. Within his own domain, each of them is a king, an emperor, an autocrat. But behind the neck of each glitters the knife of the guillotine, for the Committee of Public Safety is always prepared to listen to grievances, and holds its envoys to strict account. One who proves too clement, will himself be harshly treated; but one who is unduly ferocious, will suffer for it no less. When terror is in the ascendant at headquarters, terrorist measures are rife in the provinces; but if the central trend is towards mildness, terrorism at

the periphery will be a mistake. Ostensibly masters in their respective districts, they are in reality no more than slaves of the Committee of Public Safety, and thralls to the mood of the hour. That is why their eyes are cocked and their ears are pricked all the time to know what is going on in Paris, so that, while deciding life and death for others, they can keep their own necks whole. Theirs is no easy job. Like the generals of the revolution in face of the enemy, each one of them knows that nothing but success can save him from cold steel.

At the time when Fouché is appointed proconsul, the radicals are in control. Naturally, then, in his department of Loire Inférieure, and later in Nevers, and Moulins, he plays the radical ultra. He storms against the moderates; he issues a rain of proclamations; he utters terrifying menaces against the rich, the timid, and the lukewarm; by the methods of moral and material compulsion, he raises regiments of volunteers from the villages and sends them against the enemy. In organizational ability, in capacity for grasping a situation, he is at least equal to any of his colleagues; and in boldness of speech, he excels them all.

For it is necessary to realize that Joseph Fouché differed from the famous revolutionary champions Robespierre and Danton in that he was not mealy-mouthed about the questions of the Church and of private property. Danton respectfully declared that private property was "inviolable"; but Fouché's programme was in this matter, too, resolutely radical, was socialist, was what we

should nowadays call bolshevist. The first unflinchingly clear communist manifesto of modern times is, in reality, not the famous document of that name issued by Karl Marx, nor yet Georg Büchner's *Hessische Landbote*, but a pronunciamento which socialist historiographers seem determined to overlook, that "Instruction" issued in Lyons signed by both Collot d'Herbois and Fouché, but indubitably compiled by Fouché alone. This energetic document, one of the most astounding of the revolution, and in its requirements a century in advance of its time, is unquestionably worth dragging out of its obscurity. Even if its historical significance is impaired by the fact that in after years the Duke of Otranto was so strenuous in his repudiation of the demands made by the simple citizen Joseph Fouché—nevertheless, if we disregard this, if we pay no heed to what happened afterwards, it is a confession of faith which stamps its author as, at the time of writing, the most clear-headed socialist and communist of the revolution. It was not Marat, and it was not Chaumette, who voiced the boldest claims of the French revolution, but Joseph Fouché; and the wording of the original text throws more light than pages of description could do upon a character which is elusive, as a rule, because of the man's predilection for the twilight.

The "Instruction" begins with one of those declarations of infallibility proper to the audacious: "Everything is permissible to those who are working for the revolution; the only danger for the republican is to lag behind the laws of the Republic: one who outstrips them,

gets ahead of them; one who seemingly overshoots the aim, has often not yet reached the goal. While there is still any one unhappy in the world, there are still some steps to take in the racecourse of liberty."

After this maximalist preamble, Fouché defines the revolutionary spirit in the following terms: "The revolution is made for the people; and it is easy to understand that when we speak of the people we do not mean that class, privileged by its wealth, which had usurped all the pleasures of life and all the goods of society. The people is the universality of French citizens: the people is, above all, the huge class of the poor; that class which gives men to the country, defenders to our frontiers; the class which nourishes society by its labour. The revolution would be a monster, both politically and morally, if its only object were to ensure the happiness of a few hundreds of individuals and to consolidate the misery of twenty-four millions of citizens. It would be a ludicrous insult to mankind to go on talking perpetually about equality if in respect of happiness there were still to exist huge gulfs between one man and another." After this exordium, Fouché proceeds to develop his favourite theory, that the rich man, the "mauvais riche," can never be a true revolutionist, can never be a genuine, an upright republican; and that, consequently, a merely bourgeois revolution, one which leaves distinctions of property unaffected, will inevitably degenerate into a new tyranny, "for the rich man cannot help looking upon himself as kneaded out of a different dough from other men."

Fouché therefore demands from the people the ut-

most energy, and support of a complete, an "integral" revolution. He writes: "Make no mistake: to be genuinely republican, every citizen must experience and effect within himself a revolution equal to that which has changed the face of France. There is nothing, absolutely nothing, in common between the slave of a tyrant and the inhabitant of a free State; the manners and customs of the latter, his principles, his sentiments, his actions, must be of an entirely new kind. You were oppressed; you must crush your oppressors. You were slaves of superstition; henceforward your only object of worship must be freedom. Every man to whom such enthusiasm is foreign, every man who knows other pleasures and other cares than the happiness of the people; every man who opens his mind to the cold speculations of interest; every man who considers what advantage he may derive from a piece of land, a post, or a talent, and can, even for a moment, draw a line between this idea and that of the general welfare; every one whose blood fails to boil at the mere name of tyranny, slavery, or wealth; every man who has tears to shed for the enemies of the people, who fails to reserve all his sensibilities for the victims of despotism and for the martyrs of liberty—all men of that stamp and who dare to call themselves republicans are giving the lie to nature and to their hearts. Let them flee from the soil of liberty, for they will soon be recognized for what they are, and will water it with their unclean blood. The Republic has no use for any but freemen; it has made up its mind to exterminate all the others, and not to accept as its children any but those

who know how to live, to fight, and to die for it alone." In the third paragraph of this Instruction, the revolutionary avowal takes the form of an unqualified communist manifesto: "Every one who is above the pressure of want must contribute to this exceptional levy. The tax must be proportional to the greatness of the country's needs. You should begin by fixing at a munificent and truly revolutionary scale the sum which each individual ought to hand over to the community for public use. We are not concerned here with mathematical exactitude, or with the timorous scruples which must guide us in the fixing of ordinary taxes. We have to do with an extraordinary measure, which must display the features of the circumstances that render it necessary. Act, therefore, on the grand scale. Take everything beyond what a citizen absolutely needs, for superfluity is an obvious and gratuitous violation of the rights of the people. Every man who has more than he strictly needs, cannot use it, but only abuse it. Thus, when you have left him what is absolutely necessary, all the remainder, while the war lasts, belongs to the Republic and to its less well-to-do members."

In this manifesto, Fouché expressly declares that it will not suffice to take money from those who have superfluities. "All the things of which they have more than enough, and which can be useful to the defenders of the country, are instantly to be claimed by the country. Thus, there are people who have a ridiculous accumulation of sheets, of shirts, of table-napkins, and of shoes; all these objects, and others of the sort, can properly be

made the subject of revolutionary requisitions." He also bluntly demands the handing over of gold and silver, "vile and corrupting metals," which the true republican despises. They must be sent to the national treasury, so that there "they can be given the imprint of the Republic, and, after having been purified by the flames, they will thenceforward circulate only for purposes of general utility. Provide us with steel and with iron, and the Republic will triumph!" He closes with a fierce appeal for ruthlessness: "We shall be harsh in the full use of the authority delegated to us, and we shall punish as treachery, whatever, in other circumstances, you might have been entitled to call slackness, weakness, or negligence. The time for half-measures and backsliding is over and done with. Help us to strike hard blows, for if you fail to do so you will feel them on yourselves. Liberty or death! Think it over, and choose between them."

This document will give us a hint as to what must have been the practice of Joseph Fouché in his office as proconsul. In the department of Loire Inférieure, and in Nevers, and Moulins, he carries on an active war against the two strongest powers in France, those which even Robespierre and Danton had hesitated to attack—private property and the Church. He takes speedy and decisive action in this direction of the "égalisation des fortunes" by the appointment of "philanthropic committees," to which well-to-do persons are to contribute "voluntarily." That there be no mistake about the sort of good will they are to show, he gives a gentle warning to the effect that: "The rich man has at his disposal a

powerful means for making the regime of liberty lovable, namely his superfluity. The Republic has the right to annex it for this purpose." Nor is there to be any mistake as to what he means by "superfluity," for he says: "A republican needs no more than iron, bread, and forty crowns of income." Fouché takes horses out of the stables, flour out of the sacks; he makes the bailiffs on the estates responsible under pain of death for adequate levies; he orders that only one kind of bread shall be baked, the "pain de l'unité," a war bread like that of our own recent experience, and prohibits all fancy bread. Thus every week he is able to rope in five thousand recruits, fully equipped with horses, boots, clothing, and muskets; he forcibly sets the factories to work; and he displays an iron energy which makes every one subservient to his will. Money flows in freely, supplies are abundant, service is promptly rendered, and after he has ruled for two months he writes proudly to the Convention: "People blush here to be rich." If he had written the truth, he would have said: "People tremble here to be rich."

Simultaneously with these manifestations of zeal as radical and communist, Joseph Fouché, who in later days is to be the millionaire Duke of Otranto, and whose second marriage will be celebrated in church under the patronage of a king, shows himself to be the most savage of all the adversaries of Christianity. In an incendiary letter he writes that it is necessary "to substitute the worship of the Republic and of morality for that of the

ancient superstitions"; and his attacks on the churches and the cathedrals succeed one another like thunderbolts. He issues decrees of this sort: "Under pain of imprisonment, priests and ministers of religion are forbidden to wear clerical dress anywhere outside their churches." Again: "The time has come for the members of this haughty caste, returning to the pure principles of the primitive church, to re-enter the class of citizens." Ere long it does not suffice Joseph Fouché to be commander-in-chief in his district, supreme officer of justice, and dictator of the civil administration; he also usurps the highest authority in religious matters. He abolishes celibacy, ordering the priests to marry or to adopt a child within a month; he marries people and divorces them in the market-place; he mounts the pulpit (from which crosses and other religious emblems have been removed) and delivers atheistic sermons in which he denies the immortality of the soul and the existence of the deity. Christian funeral ceremonies are abolished, and as their only consolation the relatives of the deceased read over the gates of the cemeteries the inscription: "Death is an eternal sleep." In Nevers, this new "pope" inaugurates secular baptism in the case of his daughter, whom he names after the department "Nièvre." The National Guard has to turn out with a fife-and-drum band, and in the public square he formally gives the child her name without any assistance from the Church. In Moulins, he rides through the town at the head of a procession, hammer in hand, smashing crosses, crucifixes, and images of the saints—the "shameful" tokens of fanaticism. The

priests' birettas and the altar-cloths are heaped into a pile and burned, and, while the flames rise skyward, the joyful mob dances round this atheistic auto-da-fé. But such half measures as those of his campaign against dead things, against defenceless stone images and fragile crosses, do not suffice Joseph Fouché. His real triumph comes when, thanks to his eloquence, Archbishop François Laurent replaces the cowl by the red cap, and when thirty priests enthusiastically follow the head shepherd's example—a success which causes a stir throughout the country. He can plume himself when he reports to colleagues less zealous than himself in the cause of atheism that he has pulverized fanaticism, and that in his district he has been able to eradicate Christianity as ruthlessly as wealth.

At the first glance, we may look upon these doings as the crazy excesses of a zealot. But behind the veil of assumed passion, Joseph Fouché remains a calculator and a realist. He knows that he will be held accountable by the Convention; and he knows, likewise, that patriotic phrases and epistles are no less depreciated than the assignats, and that an official who is to arouse admiration must do so by putting hard cash in circulation. That is why, while the troops he has levied are marching to the frontier, he sends to Paris all the proceeds of his plunder of the Church. Case after case is dispatched to the Convention, filled with golden monstrances, broken and melted silver candelabra, costly crucifixes, and jewels torn from their settings. He knows that such negotiable assets are the chief need of the Republic, and he there-

fore leads the way in the sending of such eloquent booty to the deputies, who are amazed at his energy, and greet it with acclamations. The upshot is that henceforward in the Convention Fouché is spoken of as a man of iron, as the most vigorous and the most courageous of all republicans.

When Joseph Fouché returns from his mission, he is no longer the unknown deputy of 1792. He has furnished ten thousand recruits; he has extorted from the provinces a large sum in hard cash; and he has done all this without once having recourse to the "national razor." How can the Convention fail to admire him "for his vigilance and his zeal"? Chaumette, the Jacobin extremist, writes a pæan concerning his activities: "Citizen Fouché has worked the miracles of which I have been speaking. Old age has been honoured; infirmity has been succoured; misfortune has been respected; fanaticism has been destroyed; federalism has been annihilated; the production of iron has been activated; suspects have been arrested; exemplary crimes have been punished; grafters have been prosecuted and imprisoned—there you have a summary of the labours of Fouché as representative of the people." Within a year from the time when he cautiously and hesitatingly took a seat among the moderates, Fouché is accounted one of the most radical of the radicals. Now, therefore, when there is a rising in Lyons, and the Republic has need of a man of energy free from fears and scruples, who can seem better fitted than he to enforce the most terrible edict ever issued by this or by

any other revolution? "The services you have rendered," says the Convention in its stilted jargon, "are the guarantee of those which you will render in the future. In the Ville Affranchie [Lyons] you will reanimate the paling fires of public spirit. Complete the revolution, end the war of the aristocrats, and may the ruins they wish to rebuild fall upon them and crush them."

Thus it is as avenger and destroyer, as the "mitrailleur de Lyon," that Joseph Fouché makes his entry upon the stage of history.

CHAPTER TWO

"LE MITRAILLEUR DE LYON"

1793

In the book of the French revolution, one of the bloodiest pages, that of the Lyons rising, is seldom turned. Yet there was hardly any town in France, Paris not excepted, where social contrasts were so glaring as in this home of the silk industry, the first great industrial centre in a country which, as a whole, was still almost exclusively petty bourgeois and agricultural. The revolution of 1792 was in the main a bourgeois revolution, but in Lyons the manual workers already constituted a sharply defined proletarian mass, completely segregated from the employing class, whose sentiments were royalist and capitalist. It was not surprising, therefore, that Lyons proved a forcing-house where the struggle both of the reaction and of the revolution assumed the bloodiest and most fanatical forms.

The adherents of the Jacobin party, the crowd of workers and unemployed, were grouped around one of those strange personalities that always come to the top in times of rapid change, one of those individuals animated by a pure and ardent idealistic faith, and one of those who do more mischief with their faith and bring about more bloodshed with their idealism than the most

brutal of realists and the most savage of terrorists. We always find that among revolutionists and reformers it is the man of quasi-religious temperament, the ecstatic, who, with the best intentions in the world, gives the impetus to murder and havoc which he himself loathes. That year there was dominant in Lyons such a man, Chalier by name, who had at one time been a priest, and also a man of business. For him the revolution had now become what Christianity had been in earlier days, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; and he had espoused the revolutionary cause with a self-sacrificing and superstitious passion. A disciple of Jean Jacques Rousseau, it seemed to him that the millennium would be achieved by making all men reasonable and equal; and his fervent love for his fellows found expression in a belief that a universal conflagration would be the dawn of a new, an imperishable humanity. As an instance of the quality of his enthusiasm may be mentioned the touching circumstance that after the destruction of the Bastille he carried one of the stones of the dungeon on foot all the way from Paris to Lyons, to use it there as a sort of altar. For him Marat, the bloodthirsty pamphleteer, was to be venerated as a god, or at any rate as an oracle. Marat, therefore, was the inspirer of Chalier's speeches, which were mystical and even childish at times, but moved the Lyons workers profoundly. They felt instinctively that he was brimming over with sympathy for his fellows; and, on the other hand, the reactionaries of the town were convinced that his pure-minded enthusiasm, his overwhelming affection for mankind, made

him more dangerous than the noisiest of the Jacobin disturbers of the peace. Thus he became at one and the same time a target for love and a target for hatred. The reactionaries, therefore, when the first signs of disturbance became noticeable in Lyons, regarding him as the ringleader, seized upon this neurotic and somewhat absurd enthusiast and clapped him into jail. The charges made against him were sustained with the aid of a forged letter; and, as a warning to the other radicals, and as a challenge to the Convention, he was sentenced to death.

Vainly did the outraged Convention send messenger after messenger to Lyons, in the hope of saving Chalier. Threats were fulminated against the local authorities, but these had taken the bit between their teeth. A while back, when a guillotine had been sent them, they had accepted the instrument of the Terror with reluctance, and had left it to rust in some out-of-the-way corner; but now they felt that the time had come to read a lesson to the terrorists by making a first use of this professedly humane instrument of the revolution upon the person of a revolutionist. For the very reason that the machine had not previously been tried, the execution of Chalier was a cruel and horrible affair. Thrice did the blunt axe fall without severing the condemned man's neck. With horror the people watched their leader as, bound and streaming with blood, he writhed under this execrable torture, until at length the executioner decapitated him with the more merciful sword.

But poor Chalier's head, thus pitifully used, was soon

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to become a palladium of revenge for the revolutionists and a Gorgon's head for the reactionaries.

The Convention was alarmed at the news of this crime. Was a French town bold enough openly to defy the National Assembly? These intrepid challengers must be drowned in their own blood. But the local authorities in Lyons knew well enough what they had to expect. Having defied the Convention, they went on to avowed rebellion. They levied troops, put the defences of the town in order, and made a stand against the armies of the Republic. Now force had to decide between Lyons and Paris, between reaction and revolution.

From the outlook of pure reason, it seemed as if a civil war at this juncture would be suicidal for the young Republic. Never had the situation been more perilous, more desperate, more hopeless. The English were in Toulon, where they had seized the fleet and the arsenal; they were threatening Dunkerque. The Prussians and the Austrians were advancing on the Rhine and in the Ardennes; and the flames of insurrection were raging throughout Vendée. Struggle and uproar were agitating republican France from one end of the country to the other. But these were the heroic days of the Convention. Guided by an intuition that boldness was the best way of meeting the dangers, after the death of Chalier the Jacobins unflinchingly refused to make terms with his executioners. They would rather perish than negotiate. A war was better, seven wars at once would be better, than a peace which was an indication of weakness. It was

the courage of despair, but it won through to victory. Just as of late in the Russian revolution when the bolsheviks were simultaneously threatened in the west and the east, in the north and the south, by the British and the mercenaries of the whole world, and were at the same time being attacked from within by the legions of Wrangel, Denikin, and Kolchak, so in the French revolution at the moment of utmost peril this illogical and berserker rage saved the situation. It availed the terrified bourgeois of Lyons nothing that they now openly threw themselves into the arms of the royalists and put their soldiers under the command of one of the late King's generals. Proletarian soldiers flocked from the farms and from the suburbs, and on October 9th the rebellious city, the second capital of France, was stormed by republican troops. This was perhaps the proudest day of the French revolution. When, in the Convention, the president solemnly arose to announce the capitulation of Lyons, the deputies sprang to their feet, and embraced one another in their jubilation, so that for the moment all dissensions seemed to be at an end. The Republic had been saved. Before France and the world, splendid witness had been borne to the irresistible strength, the combative wrath, and the impetus of the national army. But the pride of success overreached itself, and the victors hastened to transform their triumph into a Reign of Terror. Revenge must be taken on the vanquished. "An example must be given to show that the French Republic, that the youthful revolution, punishes, most severely of all, those who have revolted against the tri-

colour." Thus it comes to pass that the Convention, the advocate of humanity throughout the world, disgraces itself in a decree of which the Caliphs of Alexandria and Barbarossa at Milan had given crazy precedence. On October 12th, the president laid before the Convention the dreadful and seldom remembered decree for the destruction of Lyons.

"1. In accordance with the proposal of the Committee of Public Safety, the National Convention shall appoint an extraordinary commission of five to carry out immediately the military punishment of the counter-revolutionaries of Lyons.

"2. All the inhabitants of Lyons shall be disarmed. Their weapons shall be immediately distributed among the defenders of the Republic. Some of them shall be given to the patriots of Lyons who have been oppressed by the rich and by the counter-revolutionaries.

"3. The town of Lyons shall be destroyed. All the dwellings of the rich shall be razed to the ground. There shall only remain the dwellings of the poor, the habitations of massacred or proscribed patriots, the buildings devoted to industrial production, and the monuments consecrated to mankind and to public education.

"4. The name of Lyons shall be expunged from the list of the towns of the Republic. Henceforward the union of the houses that remain standing shall be known as the Ville Affranchie.

"5. There shall be raised above the ruins of Lyons a pillar which will announce to posterity the crime and the punishment of the royalists of that city, bearing the

inscription: 'Lyons made war against liberty, Lyons is no more!'"

No one ventured to protest against this insane determination to reduce the second largest town in France to a heap of ruins. Courage had vanished from out the Convention since the guillotine had been made ready for anyone who should even whisper the word clemency or compassion. Intimidated by its own terrorism, the assembly unanimously accepted the vandalistic proposal, and Couthon, Robespierre's right-hand man, was deputed to enforce it.

Couthon, who was thus Fouché's forerunner at Lyons, was quick to recognize how preposterous, how suicidal, was the proposal, in a wanton desire to strike terror into all beholders, to destroy the chief industrial town of France, a place worthy of preservation were it only on account of its famous cathedral and other monuments of art. From the first, therefore, he made up his mind to frustrate the scheme. But this could not be done openly. He was shrewd enough to mask his secret determination to save Lyons by declaring, in exaggerated terms, that the mission on which he was engaged met with his wholehearted approval. "Citizen colleagues, the reading of the decree of the National Convention of the twenty-first of the first month [October 12th] has filled us with admiration. Yes, it is essential that this town shall be destroyed, and that it shall serve as a signal example to all those cities which, like it, might dare to revolt against the country. Among the great and vigorous measures

hitherto taken by the National Convention, one thing alone has been lacking—an order for complete destruction.—But be easy in your minds, citizen colleagues, and reassure the National Convention. Its principles are ours; our weapons shall be animated by its vigour; and its decree shall be enforced to the uttermost." Nevertheless the man who welcomes his appointment with this pæan, is doing so only as a demonstration, and does not intend to carry his words into effect. Afflicted, though still in his prime, with paralysis of both legs, but a man of unbending will and with intelligence unimpaired, he has himself borne in a litter into the market-place of Lyons. There with blows of a silver hammer he symbolically indicates the houses which are to be torn down, and announces short shrift for all offenders. This demonstration suffices for the time being to appease the hotheads. What he actually does is to plead a lack of men for the work of destruction, and to send a few women and children who, with spades, in pure formality, make preliminary excavations adjacent to the condemned buildings. As for executions, they are few in number.

The inhabitants breathe freely once more when they find that mild deeds follow harsh words. But the terrorists are not asleep. Realizing ere long that Couthon will not take decisive steps, they raise a hubbub in the Convention. Chalier's head is sent to Paris as a relic, is shown to the assembly, and is then put on exhibit at Notre Dame in order to infuriate the people. Louder and louder complaints are voiced against Couthon: he is lukewarm, he is slothful, he is cowardly; in a word, he

is not man enough to carry out so exemplary a vengeance. There is need for an emissary without fears and scruples, a stalwart revolutionist who will not shrink from bloodshed or quail at the thought of extreme measures, a man of iron. At length the Convention hearkens to the clamour. Couthon is recalled, his place being taken by the most resolute of the tribunes, Collot d'Herbois. This will surely be the man to deal faithfully with the burghers of Lyons, for (so runs the tale) in his earlier career as an actor he had once been hissed off the Lyons stage! As assistant judge and executioner the Convention dispatches to the unhappy town the extremest radical among all its proconsuls, the notorious Jacobin and terrorist ultra, Joseph Fouché.

This man Joseph Fouché, now suddenly called upon to do assassin's work—is he really an executioner, a "blood-drinker," as the champions of the terror were then called? In speech, certainly. Had any other proconsul shown himself more strenuously radical and revolutionary? He had been pitiless in his requisitions, he had plundered the churches, he had confiscated private property, and he had nipped resistance in the bud. But, as was characteristic, his terrorism had stopped short at words, at commands, and at menaces, for through all the weeks of his reign in Nevers and in Clamecy he shed no drop of blood. While in Paris the guillotine was clacking away like a cutter and binder, while in Nantes Carrier was drowning suspects by hundreds in the Loire, while the whole country was reverberating with the noise

of man-hunts and fusillades, Fouché as far as his own district was concerned had not so much as one political execution on his conscience. In this matter, as always, his knowledge of psychology was his guide. He knew that most people are cowards, and that the threat of terrorism usually suffices. Later, when reaction was in full swing, and the provinces were voicing loud complaints against their sometime Jacobin rulers, all that could be said against Fouché as regards his earlier activities as proconsul was that he had breathed threatenings and slaughter. No actual execution was laid to his charge. We see, then, that Fouché, appointed to be one of the executioners of Lyons, is not bloodthirsty. He is cold and dispassionate, he is a calculating thinker, he is rather fox than tiger, and he does not crave for the smell of blood to stimulate his nerves. Inwardly unmoved, he rages and storms, but is free from delight in murder for its own sake, is free from the mania for power which may lead a dictator to order mass executions. From instinct and from prudence (not from humaneness), he respects the lives of others so long as his own is not endangered thereby; and he will only think in earnest of taking the life or the fortune of another, when such a course seems expedient to him in his own interest.

That is one of the clues to the happenings of almost every revolution, and to the tragical destiny of the leaders of revolution. Whether they are bloodthirsty or not (and many of them are not), circumstances force bloodshed upon them. Desmoulins, writing at his desk, furiously demands that the Girondists shall be proscribed;

but when, soon afterwards, he is sitting in the judgment hall, and hears the sentence passed on the two-and-twenty who are there because he has sent them, he springs to his feet, trembling and deathly pale, and flees from the revolutionary tribunal in despair. He is horrified, for he does not really will their execution. Robespierre, whose signature stands at the foot of thousands of documents pregnant with doom, had in the Constituent Assembly condemned capital punishment and had stigmatized war as a crime. Danton, though he was the creator of the revolutionary tribunal, uttered the cry of a soul in pain, "rather be guillotined than use the guillotine." Even Marat, who in "L'Ami du Peuple" demands that three hundred thousand heads shall fall, tries to rescue particular individuals whose death under the knife is imminent. One and all, though described in later days as sanguinary monsters, as inspired with a lust for murder, as intoxicated by the stench of corpses—one and all (like Lenin and the other leaders of the Russian revolution) they detest such executioner's work. Their first endeavour invariably is to keep their political adversaries in check by the mere threat of execution; but they have sown the dragon's teeth, and their theoretical condonation of murder produces its inevitable fruit.

The fault of the French revolutionists therefore was, not that they were drunk with blood, but that they were drunk with words of blood. Their folly led them, simply in order to stimulate popular enthusiasm and to attest their own radicalism, to coin a savage phraseology and to talk incessantly of the need for sending traitors to the

scaffold. Then, when the people, made rabid by these fulminations, rejoined by demanding the immediate inauguration of the "energetic measures" whose necessity had been so loudly proclaimed, the leaders had not the courage to resist. They had to keep the guillotine busy in order to justify their bloodthirsty harangues. By their actions they must try to sanction their words. They vied with one another in savagery because each of them was afraid to lag behind in this hunt after popular favour. By the inexorable law of gravity, each execution dragged others in its train. Those who had begun the game with no more than ferocious mouthings, now tried to surpass one another in bloody deeds. Not from frenzied passion, and still less from stern resolution, were so many victims sacrificed. Irresolution, rather, was at work; the irresolution of politicians who lacked courage to withstand the mob. In the last analysis, cowardice was to blame. For, alas, history is not only (as we are so often told) the history of human courage, but also the history of human faint-heartedness; and politics is not (as politicians would fain have us believe) the guidance of public opinion, but a servile bowing of the knee by the so-called leaders before the demons they have themselves conjured up. That is the way in which wars arise, out of playing with dangerous words and out of the undue stimulation of national passions. That, likewise, is the main factor of political crimes. Neither vice nor cruelty has ever caused so much blood to flow as cowardice. When, in Lyons, Joseph Fouché becomes a slaughterer, it is not under stress of republican passion (for he

is passionless), but simply and solely because he is afraid of being disapproved of as a moderate. Still, a man's reputation in history is decided, not by words but by deeds. Protest as he may against the appellation, he is on record as "le mitrailleur de Lyon." Nor in later days will the ducal mantle hide the blood-stains on his hands.

Collot d'Herbois reaches Lyons on November 7th; Joseph Fouché, on the 10th. They set to work promptly. But before the tragedy begins, the sometime comedian and his colleague the sometime priest stage a brief satire as curtain-raiser, perhaps the most provocative and the most impudent in the varied repertory of the French revolution, a sort of black mass celebrated in the open light of day. The obsequies of Chalier, the martyr in the cause of liberty, serve as pretext for this orgy of atheistic exuberance. As prelude, at eight o'clock in the morning, all the churches are stripped of their last pious emblems: the crucifixes are torn down; the altar-cloths and vestments seized; and then a huge procession marches through the streets to the Place des Terreaux. On a stretcher draped with the tricolour, four Jacobins from Paris carry the bust of Chalier, adorned with flowers; also an urn containing his ashes; also in a cage, a pigeon, said to have been a comfort to him in prison. Behind the bearers stride the proconsuls on their way to the new-fangled religious ceremony, which is to testify to the people of Lyons the divinity of the martyred Chalier, "le dieu sauveur mort pour eux." As if the affair were not already unpalatable enough, it is made even more repulsive,

is debased yet further by a gross error in taste. A riotous crowd heads the show, dancing and shouting, while many of them flourish the chalices, the robes, and the images stolen from the churches; and while immediately in front of the central feature of the procession someone leads a donkey with a bishop's mitre pulled on over its ears. To the poor beast's tail a crucifix and a Bible have been fastened, so that the revered emblem and the book of holy writ are dragged along through the dirt.

At length a flourish of trumpets calls a halt. In the great square, where an altar decked with greenery has been set up, the bust of Chalier and the urn are solemnly installed, and the representatives of the people bow reverently before the new saint. When the trained elocutionist Collot d'Herbois has delivered an oration, Fouché's turn comes. At the sittings of the Convention he had been a master of the art of silence, but he has found his tongue now, and apostrophizes the plaster-cast in extravagant terms thus: "Chalier, Chalier, thou art no more! Martyr to liberty, wretches have sacrificed thee. Their blood is the only water of purification which can appease the righteous wrath of thy shade! Chalier, Chalier, before thy sacred image we swear to avenge thy torments! The blood of aristocrats shall serve thee as incense." A third commissary, present on the occasion, lacks the eloquence of the aristocrat-to-be, the coming Duke of Otranto. He reverently kisses the forehead of the bust and makes his voice ring through the square as he shouts: "Death to the aristocrats!"

After these formalities, a great pyre is kindled. Joseph

Fouché (so recently a wearer of the tonsure) stands gravely beside his two colleagues watching while the Bible is detached from the donkey's tail and cast into the flames, to burn amid the flaring and the smoking heap of vestments, missals, sacramental wafers, and wooden images of the saints. Then the four-footed grey brother, as a reward for his sacrilegious labours, is given to drink from a chalice. The offensive absurdity having at length come to an end, the four Jacobins take the bust of Chalier on their shoulders once more and carry it back to the church, where it is left on the altar in place of the broken figure of the Crucified.

Next day, a medal is struck in commemoration of the festivity. Unfortunately no specimen of it is extant, presumably because the Duke of Otranto had them all bought up and destroyed, just as he was ever on the hunt for copies of the books describing the heroic deeds of the days when he was a Jacobin extremist and an enthusiastic atheist. He had an excellent memory. It would, however, have been most unpleasing, most inconvenient, to "son excellence monseigneur le sénateur ministre" of a Most Christian Monarch that any other than himself should remember or be reminded of the black mass of Lyons.

Even though Joseph Fouché's first day in Lyons may make one's gorge rise, still it is nothing more than foolish masquerade and comparatively harmless farce. No blood has been shed. Next morning, however, the proconsuls are sitting behind closed doors in an out-of-the-way house, with armed sentries to keep away unwelcome

intruders; the sentries symbolize that clemency, intercession, kindliness are to have no place in their chiefs' counsels. A revolutionary tribunal is to be set up, and the letter which the uncrowned kings Fouché and Collot send to the Convention shows what sort of a St. Bartholomew's night they are planning: "We are fulfilling our mission with the energy proper to republicans fully aware of their responsibilities; we shall not yield a jot; and we shall not come down from the eminence on which the people has placed us, in order to minister to the pitiful interests of men more or less blameworthy. We have secluded ourselves from all, for we have no time to lose and no favours to grant; we neither ought to see, nor do we see, anything but the Republic, anything but your decrees, which instruct us to make a signal example, to give a striking lesson; nor shall we hear anything but the cry of the people, which wishes that the blood of the patriots shall be swiftly and terribly avenged, so that mankind may not have to lament fresh outpourings. Convinced that the only innocent persons in this abominable city are those who have been oppressed or loaded with chains by the assassins of the people, we are on our guard against tears of repentance, and nothing can disarm our severity. It behoves us to assure you, citizen colleagues, that indulgence is a dangerous weakness, likely to arouse criminal hopes at the very time when they ought to be destroyed. It has been incited towards an individual, it has been incited towards all of his sort, in order to render your justice nugatory. The demolitions are going on too slowly, and republican impatience de-

mands more rapid methods. Nothing but the explosion of mines and the gluttonous activity of fire can give due expression to the omnipotence of the people. Its will cannot be frustrated like that of tyrants, and ought to have the effect of a thunderbolt."

As per programme, the storm bursts on December 4th, and its echoes cause a shudder throughout France. Early that morning, sixty young fellows are taken out of prison and fettered together in couples. Since, as Fouché puts it, the guillotine works "too slowly," they are taken to the plain of Brotteaux, on the other side of the Rhone. Two parallel trenches, hastily dug to receive their corpses, show the victims what is to be their fate, and the cannon ranged ten paces away indicate the manner of their execution. The defenceless creatures are huddled and bound together into a screaming, trembling, raging, and vainly resisting mass of human despair. A word of command, and the guns loaded with slugs are fired "into the brown." The range is murderously close, and yet the first volley does not finish them all off. Some have only had an arm or a leg blown away; others have had their bellies torn open, but are still alive; a few, as luck would have it, are uninjured. But, while blood is making runnels for itself down into the trenches, at a second order cavalrymen armed with sabres and pistols fling themselves on those who are yet alive, slashing into and firing at this helpless herd of groaning, twitching, and yelling fellow-mortals, until the last raucous voice is hushed. As a reward for their ghastly work, the butchers are then allowed to strip clothing and shoes

from the sixty warm bodies before these are cast naked into the fosses which await them.

This was the first of the notorious mitraillades of Joseph Fouché, in due course to become minister of a Most Christian King, and he boasts of it next morning in a flamboyant proclamation: "The representatives of the people will remain inexorable in the fulfillment of the mission which has been entrusted to them. The people has put into their hands the thunderbolts of vengeance, and they will not lay them down until all its enemies have been shattered. They will have courage enough and will be energetic enough to make their way through holocausts of conspirators and to march over ruins to ensure the happiness of the nation and effect the regeneration of the world." That very day this disastrous "courage" was fortified yet further by another murderous discharge of the guns of Brotteaux, fired this time at an even larger herd—for there were now two hundred head of cattle marched to the slaughter. Nearly the same routine; hands tied behind backs; victims mowed down by slugs from the cannon. But there were some trifling differences. On this occasion the finishing-off was done by rounds of infantry fire. Also the butchers were spared the heavier part of yesterday's task. Why should they add the onerous labour of trench-digging to the comparatively easy work of slaughter? What need of burial for such scum of the earth? Enough to strip the slain and fling them into the Rhone. The river would carry them out of sight.

THE MASSACRE OF LYONS, DECEMBER 4, 1793

FROM A PAINTING BY JEAN DUPLESSI-BERTAUX

But Fouché was able to cloak even this last deed of horror in exultant words. To burden the Rhone with nude and mangled, soon to be putrefying corpses was a politic act, for the river would bear the dumb witnesses to places where they would give a salutary demonstration of the pitilessness of republican vengeance: "Let the bleeding bodies give, along both banks of the stream, down to its mouth, and, farther yet, beneath the walls of the shameful Toulon, under the eyes of the cowardly and ferocious English, an impression of terror, and an image of the omnipotence of the people." In Lyons, however, there is no such need, for there execution follows upon execution, hecatomb upon hecatomb. He welcomes the conquest of Toulon "with tears of joy," but also celebrates the occasion "by sending two hundred rebels to face the cannons' mouths." He is deaf to appeals for mercy. A couple of women who have pleaded too ardently for the release of their husbands from the bloody assize are by his orders bound and placed close to the guillotine. Thereafter, no one who might pray for clemency is allowed to come near the commissaries' dwelling. But the fiercer the roar of the guns, the louder are the vociferations of the proconsul: "We do not hesitate to declare that we are shedding much unclean blood, but we do so for humane reasons, and because it is our duty. . . . We shall not betray the will of the people. We must share all its feelings, and must not lay aside the thunderbolts it has entrusted to us, until, through your instrumentality, it has ordered us to do so. Till then, we

shall continue without pause to strike down its enemies as impressively, as alarmingly, and as speedily as possible." Sixteen hundred executions within a few weeks show that, for once, Joseph Fouché is speaking the truth.

While organizing these butcheries and while writing complacent reports, Joseph Fouché and his colleague do not forget the other item of their disastrous mission to Lyons. On the very first day they complain to Paris that their predecessor has been "too slow" in carrying out the prescribed work of destruction: "but now the demolition will be hastened by mining; the sappers will begin their labours today, and within a day or two the fine houses of Bellecourt square will be blown up." These famous buildings, designed by Mansard and begun in the reign of Louis XIV, are to suffer first, because they are the most beautiful in the town. The inhabitants are brutally expelled, the unemployed of both sexes are engaged by the hundred, and after a few weeks of senseless activity the magnificent work of art has been reduced to a heap of rubbish. The unhappy town is full of sighs and groans, and echoes to the din of cannon-shots and crashing walls; for while the "comité de justice" is laying men low, the "comité de démolition" is doing the same thing with houses, and the "comité des substances" is pitilessly requisitioning food and clothing and valuables of all kinds. From cellarage to roof every house is being rummaged for hidden persons and secreted things; universal is the reign of terror established by the two commissaries, Fouché and Collot, who themselves remain

invisible and inaccessible behind the fixed bayonets of the sentries. Already the finest houses have been demolished; the prisons, though repeatedly provided with fresh droves of inmates, have been nearly emptied; the shops have been depleted of their stores; and the plain of Brotteaux has been drenched with the blood of many hundreds of human beings—when at long last a few of the boldest citizens, well aware that their temerity may cost them their heads, summon up courage to speed to Paris and implore the Convention to relent before the whole city has been razed to the ground. It need hardly be said that the petition is cautiously worded, and indeed fawning in its tone. In the opening paragraph we read that the decree for the destruction of Lyons "seems to have been dictated by the genius of the Roman Senate"; but the memorialists go on to beg "grace for sincere penitence and for the trespasses of weakness; grace, we even venture to say, for innocence misunderstood."

The proconsuls get wind of the veiled accusation, and Collot d'Herbois, as the more eloquent of the pair, hastens to Paris that he may be in good time to counter the attack. The day after his arrival he is brazen enough, before the Convention and to the Jacobins, to refrain from making any excuses for his and his colleague's barbarities. On the contrary, he extols them as manifestations of humankindliness. "It was in order to save mankind from the distressing spectacle of so many successive executions, that your commissaries undertook to have all the conspirators found guilty destroyed in one day. This determination, inspired by true feeling, will naturally

animate the heart of anyone entrusted with a like mission." Such is his statement to the Convention, and when he speaks to the Jacobins he is still more enthusiastic about the new humanitarianism, for he says: "We shot down two hundred at once, and we are told that it was a crime! How can anyone fail to see that it was an indication of sensibility. When twenty culprits are guillotined, the last to be executed dies twenty deaths, but these two hundred conspirators perished together." Strange though it may seem, the threadbare phrases have the desired effect; the Convention and the Jacobins accept Collot's explanations, and the proconsuls receive a charter for further executions. On the same day, Paris celebrates the interment of Chalier's remains in the Pantheon, an honour hitherto accorded only to Jean Jacques Rousseau and to Marat; and Chalier's mistress, like Marat's, is granted a pension. Thereby the martyr is consecrated as one of the national saints, and the sanguinary doings of Fouché and Collot d'Herbois are approved as justified vengeance.

Nevertheless the two avengers have been made a little uneasy. In view of the ticklish situation in the Convention, of the conflict between Danton and Robespierre, of the swing of the pendulum between moderation and terrorism, caution seems expedient. They agree to divide forces. Collot will stay in Paris, to watch the mood of the Committees and the Convention, and to forestall a possible attack with the resources of his vehement oratory; Fouché, at Lyons, will continue the work of massacre with his usual energy. It is important to note that

henceforward he must bear the whole responsibility for what went on in the joint proconsulate, seeing that later he tried to shift the blame for all the acts of violence onto the shoulders of his more outspoken colleague. The actual fact was that when he was left in sole command the massacre proceeded unchecked. Forty-five, sixty, a hundred men were shot down in a single day. And not only were the prisons thus freed from the danger of overcrowding, but at the same time the work of demolition was continued with the aid of the pickaxe and of flame. While thus busily engaged, Joseph Fouché found time to trumpet his own exploits in the familiar tone: "The sentences passed by this tribunal may alarm criminals, but they reassure and console the people, which applauds them as it listens. Let no one suppose that we have reprieved any of the offenders. This has not happened in a single instance."

Suddenly Fouché changes his tone! What has happened? His keen sensibilities have, from afar, made him realize that the wind must have veered in the Convention. That only can explain why, of late, his trumpetings about continued executions have ceased to arouse the anticipated echoes! His friends among the Jacobins, his fellow-atheists Hébert and Chaumette and Ronsin, have been reduced to silence. Their voices have been stilled because the pitiless hand of Robespierre has seized them by the throat. That tiger of a man, balancing adroitly as usual between savagery and clemency, swinging like a pendulum now to the Right and now to the Left, using

his elbows vigorously to secure breathing-space, has from his covert pounced on the extreme radicals. At his instigation Carrier, who has been drowning people wholesale in Nantes just as Fouché has been shooting them wholesale in Lyons, is being called to account by the assembly; acting on Robespierre's instructions his soul-brother and chosen instrument Saint-Just has in Strasburg sent the rabid Eulogius Schneider to the guillotine; while the dictator has publicly stigmatized as follies such atheistic mummeries as Fouché had inaugurated at Lyons, and has forbidden them in Paris. The deputies, cowed into obedience, are still acting on his slightest hint.

Once more Fouché is seized with his old dread of being segregated from the majority. If terrorism is no longer in fashion, why be a terrorist? He had better follow the moderates, Danton and Desmoulins, who are now demanding "an indulgent tribunal"; he had better adjust his cloak to the wind that is blowing from a new quarter. On February 6th he orders the mitraillades to be discontinued. The guillotine (though so recently he had complained that it was too slow) may carry on the good work, but at a reduced tempo—let there be a daily dole of two or three heads in the basket, a shabby output when compared to the mass shootings in the plain of Brotteaux. Turning his energies in a fresh direction, he begins to hunt his sometime radical friends, the very men who have been inaugurating his festivals and carrying out his decrees; the fire-breathing Saul becomes a humanely disposed Paul. That there may be no mistake

about his sentiments, he now speaks of Chalier's admirers as comprising "an arena of anarchists and of riot," and forthwith dissolves a dozen or two of the revolutionary committees. The upshot is remarkable. All at once the ordinary inhabitants of Lyons, who have been panic-stricken, come to regard Fouché, the hero of the mitraillades, as their saviour. But the ultras of the city again write furious letters to Paris, accusing the envoy extraordinary of the Convention—Fouché, this time—of lukewarmness, treason, and "the oppression of patriots."

Such bold changes of front, such desertions to the enemy in the broad light of day, such flights into the camp of the victor, are Fouché's approved tactics, and to them alone does he owe his life. For the nonce, indeed, he faces both ways. If in Paris he is charged with being unduly lenient, he can point to the hundreds upon hundreds of the slain and to the crumbling ruins of Lyons. If, on the other hand, he is accused of being a butcher, he can remind his adversaries of the complaints of the Jacobins who have blamed him for undue moderation. According as the wind veers, he can produce, out of one pocket, proofs of his inexorability, and, out of the other, proofs of his humaneness, can pose equally well as the executioner and as the saviour of Lyons. Later, with the aid of such conjurer's arts, he was actually successful in thrusting the whole responsibility for the Lyons massacres upon the memory of his frank and straightforward associate Collot d'Herbois. At the moment, however, Robespierre still rules in Paris, and Robespierre (who

will never pardon Fouché for having replaced his own henchman Couthon in Lyons) cannot be so easily humbugged. Robespierre has watched Fouché in the Convention, is familiar with all Fouché's shifts and wiles. And Robespierre has iron claws. What they seize, they hold fast. On the twelfth Germinal he induces the Committee of Public Safety to recall Fouché, who must face an inquiry regarding the events at Lyons. The man who for three months has been holding a bloody assize is now to taste his own medicine.

He is to answer before the tribunal, and to what charges? Is it because, as colleague of Carrier and the other wholesale executioners, he has had two thousand Frenchmen massacred within three months? Not at all; for now we are to realize how politic has been, in its astounding impudence, the last change of colour on the part of Fouché, the chameleon. He is to be called to account because he has suppressed the radical organization known as the Société Populaire," because he has persecuted the Jacobins of Lyons. "Le mitrailleur de Lyon," the slayer of two thousand victims, is, by the irony of history, accused of the noblest offence a mortal can commit—undue humaneness.

CHAPTER THREE

THE STRUGGLE WITH ROBESPIERRE

1794

On April 3rd, Joseph Fouché learns that the Committee of Public Safety has recalled him to Paris to account for his doings in Lyons, and on the 5th he sets out for the metropolis. The thuds of sixteen blows accompany his departure, sixteen strokes of the guillotine, acting for the last time under his proconsulate. That same day, two final sentences are hastily passed, for who are the two last stragglers among the massacred, the two who (according to the cheerful phraseology of the day) must spit their heads in the basket? No other than the Lyons executioner and his assistant. The very twain who, under the orders of the reaction, had guillotined Chalier and his friends, and then with no less equanimity, under the orders of the revolution, guillotined hundreds of the reactionaries, have now to put their own necks under the knife. With the best will in the world, it is impossible to discover from the records with what offence they were charged. Probably they were sacrificed to deprive them of any opportunity of blabbing about Lyons to Fouché's successors in that city and to posterity in general. Dead men tell no tales.

The carriage speeds on its way. Fouché has plenty

to think about during the drive. He can console himself with the reflection that all is not yet lost. He still has many influential friends in the Convention; and, in especial, he can count on Robespierre's great adversary, Danton. Perhaps he will still be able to hold his terrible enemy in check. He does not suspect that in this fateful hour of the revolution, events are rolling far more rapidly than the wheels of the diligence from Lyons to Paris. He has not been informed that for the last two days his intimate Chaumette has been in prison; that yesterday the leonine head of Danton fell beneath the guillotine; that on the same day Condorcet, the spiritual leader of the Right, was hiding and starving in the outskirts of Paris, to poison himself on the morrow in order to escape execution. All three have been laid low by the same man, and this man, Robespierre, is his fiercest political opponent. Not until he reaches Paris on the evening of the 8th does he learn the full extent of the danger into whose jaws he has run. We may guess that he can have slept little, Proconsul Joseph Fouché, on the first night after his return to Paris.

Next morning he betakes himself early to the Convention, and eagerly awaits the opening of the session. It seems strange that the great hall should fill so slowly; that half, and more then half, of the places should remain empty. No doubt, a good many of the deputies may be absent on missions, or may be kept away by some other reason. But why should there be such yawning gaps on the Right, where the leaders used to sit, the Girondists,

the most noted orators of the revolution? What has become of them? Two-and-twenty of the boldest, Vergniaud, Brissot, and others, have perished on the scaffold, or have killed themselves, or, fleeing through the wilds, have been torn to pieces by the wolves. Seventy-three of their friends who had attempted to defend them have been expelled by the majority. Thus, at one blow, Robespierre has rid himself of nearly a hundred of his opponents on the Right. But he has been no less vigorous in thinning the ranks of his own party on the Mountain. Danton, Desmoulins, Chabot, Hébert, Fabre d'Eglantine, and a couple of dozen more—all of his sometime allies who resisted his will and rebelled against his dogmatic vanity—have been slain by him, and their bodies are in the lime-pit.

He has put them out of action, this insignificant looking fellow, this small, lean man with a sallow complexion, a low and receding forehead, and pale, short-sighted eyes—this man whose inconspicuous figure was for long almost hidden by the giant frames of his predecessors. But time's scythe has cleared the way for him. Now that Mirabeau, Marat, Danton, Desmoulins, Vergniaud, and Condorcet are gone—the tribune, the agitator, the leader, the author, the orator, and the thinker, of the young Republic—Robespierre has amalgamated all important functions in his own person, has become pontifex maximus, dictator, and celebrator of a triumph. Fouché looks uneasily at his antagonist, on whom the servile deputies are now fawning, while Robespierre, wrapped in his "virtue" as if it were a toga, indifferently

accepts this veneration. Unapproachable and impenetrable, with his myopic gaze the Incorruptible scans the arena in the conviction that no one will dare to oppose his will.

But one man dares, nevertheless. A man who has nothing left to lose. Joseph Fouché asks leave to speak in order to justify his conduct in Lyons.

Fouché's demand to speak on his own behalf in the Convention is a challenge to the Committee of Public Safety, for the Committee and not the Convention has called him to account. But he is appealing to the assembly of the nation, as ostensibly the higher authority. The implication is unmistakable. Nevertheless, the president gives the word to Citizen Fouché. Of course this deputy is far from being a man of no moment. His name has often been spoken in that hall. His services, his reports, his deeds, have not been forgotten. It is a circumstantial report which he reads now, after mounting the speaker's pulpit. The assembly listens without interrupting him, without any sign of approval or disapproval. When the speech comes to an end, no one lifts a finger, for the Convention has grown timid. During the year in which the guillotine has been reaping its red harvest, all these representatives of the people have been spiritually emasculated. Those who used to give free utterance to their convictions, who used to throw themselves frankly and unreservedly into the struggle of words and sentiments, are disinclined now to commit themselves. Since the executioner has, like Polyphemus, been picking his victims out of their ranks, sometimes to Right and some-

times to Left, since the shadow of the death-dealing machine has seemed to stalk behind every unwary word, silence has become wiser than speech. Each one is trying to hide behind his fellows, and each one looks furtively over his shoulder before venturing to make a movement. Anxiety lies like a pall of grey mist upon their countenances; and nothing debases men, especially a mass of men, more than the dread of the unseen.

That is why they will not hazard an opinion. They are determined to avoid any intrusion into the domain of the Committee of Public Safety, the invisible tribunal! Fouché's justification is neither accepted nor rejected, but simply referred to the Committee. This means that it lands on the shore from which Fouché had sedulously endeavoured to keep it. He had lost the first round.

Terror gnaws at his vitals. He has advanced too far into unknown country, and must seek safety in a prompt retreat. It will be better to capitulate than to fight single-handed against the dictator. He bows his head in penitence. That same evening he calls on Robespierre to talk matters over, or, in truth, to sue for pardon.

The interview had no witnesses, and we know nothing of it but its upshot. We can, however, picture its details from the account of a similar visit which Barras describes so shudderingly in his memoirs. Fouché, too, before mounting the wooden stairs leading into the little house in the Rue Saint-Honoré where Robespierre kept his virtue and his poverty on exhibition, must have submitted

to the inspection of the landlord and landlady, who watched over their god and tenant as if he had been the Ark of the Covenant. No doubt Robespierre (receiving Fouché, as he received Barras, in the bare little room whose only decoration was the vainglorious display of the inmate's own portrait on the walls), will have refrained from asking his visitor to be seated, and will have kept the intruder ignominiously standing like a criminal in the dock. For this man who was so passionate an admirer of virtue, and who was in truth inspired with a morbid and overweening love for his own virtue, had no consideration and no forgiveness for anyone who had ventured to differ from him in opinion. Intolerant and fanatical, like Savonarola in his unyielding devotion to what he regarded as reason and virtue, he invariably refused to treat with an opponent, or so much as to accept an unqualified submission. Even when considerations of policy seemed to make concession imperative, his vindictiveness and his dogmatic pride stood in the way. We do not know what was said by either. All we know is that Fouché's reception must have been unfavourable; that Robespierre's manner must have been crushing and inexorable; that there must have been pitiless sermonizing, cold menace, and a death-sentence in effigy. The departing guest, when, humiliated and scorned, trembling with mingled fear and wrath, he made his way down that staircase in the Rue Saint-Honoré, must have known there could be only one way of saving his own neck, and that this would be by making sure that the dictator should go first to the guillotine. War to the knife

had been declared. The duel between Robespierre and Fouché had begun.

This duel between Robespierre and Fouché is one of the most tense, and, psychologically considered, one of the most exciting, of all the incidents of the French revolution. Both men were shrewd, both were accomplished politicians; but both, the challenged no less than the challenger, had made the same mistake, in that each of the duellists, for a considerable time, misled by the experience of earlier days, had underestimated his adversary. For Fouché, Robespierre was still the plodding and jejune country lawyer, the man whose petty jests had raised a laugh now and again, in the club at Arras, who had had a taste for writing sugary versicles in the style of Grécourt, and who a little later had bored the assembly of 1789 by his verbose speeches. Fouché did not realize, or realized too late, that, through industrious and persevering self-tuition and in the impetus of the task, Robespierre had from being a mere demagogue developed into a statesman, from being a supple intriguer developed into a man with keen political insight, and from being a mere spouter developed into an accomplished orator. In one who contains any elements of greatness, responsibility almost invariably matures the character. Thus Robespierre had grown in mental stature with the growing conviction that he had a mission of supreme importance, that amid the greedy fortune-hunters and idle talkers by whom he was surrounded it devolved upon him alone to save the Republic. For the

sake of all mankind it was his duty to establish on a secure footing that Republic, the revolution, morality, divinity itself—all, of course, as he conceived them. Robespierre's tenacity of purpose was his finest quality, but it was also his greatest weakness. For, intoxicated by the sense of his own incorruptibility and clad as he was in an armour of stubborn dogmatism, he considered that divergences of opinion were treasonable, and with the cold cruelty of a grand inquisitor he was ready to regard as heretics all who differed from him and to send them to a heretic's doom. The guillotine was the modern equivalent of the mediæval stake. Beyond question, a great idea, a pure idea, animated the Robespierre of 1794, or, rather, was congealed within him. Because it was congealed, it could not pass freely out of him into the world of action, and he could not free himself from its trammels. (Such is the perennial fate of dogmatists.) The lack of communicable warmth, of contagious humanity, deprived his actions of procreative energy. His strength lay exclusively in his stubbornness; his power, in his unyielding severity. His dictatorship had become for him the entire substance and the all-engrossing form of his life. Unless he could stamp his own ego on the revolution, that ego would be shattered.

Such a man cannot endure contradiction, cannot suffer difference of opinion, cannot permit a rival to exist. Still less can he allow an avowed opponent to go on living in the world where he holds sway. Robespierre could only tolerate those who were but mirrors reflecting his own views, those who were in spiritual thraldom to himself

like Couthon and Saint-Just. Woe, above all, to those who did not merely differ from him in opinion, but dared to translate their differences into the world of action, to scout his infallibility, to thwart his wishes. That is what Joseph Fouché had done. Fouché had never asked Robespierre's advice; had never bowed the knee before the sometime friend; had been sitting in the Convention among the enemies of the Mountain; and had, by preaching communism and atheism, transgressed the limits of the moderate and cautious socialism espoused by the dictator. As yet, however, Robespierre had paid little heed to Fouché, who had seemed insignificant. The deputy from Nantes had only been the seminary schoolmaster, who was still wearing a priest's frock when Robespierre had first made his acquaintance a few years before in Arras; the man who had courted Charlotte Robespierre; the slave of petty ambitions who had been faithless to his God, his betrothed, and his convictions. Robespierre had despised him, as Mr. Stubborn always despises Mr. Pliable, as the diehard always despises the trimmer of sails; Robespierre had mistrusted Fouché as the man of religious temperament invariably mistrusts the man whose outlook is exclusively secular: but hitherto this detestation had not been concentrated on Fouché's person; it had spent itself on the tribe of which he was merely an unimportant member. Why trouble to crush a schemer so paltry that he can be crushed without effort in case of need? Hitherto Robespierre had thought it enough to keep on eye on Fouché, without seriously attacking him.

At length the time has come when each grows aware that he has been making too light of the other. Fouché realizes that while he has been away from Paris Robespierre has become practically omnipotent, controlling all the offices of State, ruling the army, the police, the law courts, the Committees, the Convention, and the Jacobins. There seems to be no hope of putting up a successful fight against him. But Robespierre has forced the issue, and Fouché knows that his own life is in the balance. For him it is victory or death. Despair gives him strength and courage. Two paces from the abyss, like a hunted stag, he turns at bay.

Hostilities are opened by Robespierre. To begin with he is content to read the presumptuous Fouché a lecture, to give a warning, to deliver a contemptuous kick. An occasion offers when, on May 6th, he makes the famous speech calling upon all spiritually minded persons in the Republic "to recognize the existence of a Supreme Being and the Immortality of the Soul as the guiding forces of the universe." Never did Robespierre make a finer, a more impassioned speech than this, which he is believed to have composed at the country residence of Jean Jacques Rousseau. In it, the dogmatist became almost a poet, the cloudy idealist became almost a thinker. The separation of faith from unbelief on the one hand, and from superstition on the other; the creation of a religion which should be elevated above the current image-worshipping Christianity and no less so above the vacuity of materialism and atheism (thus likewise pursuing a middle course, as was always Robespierre's endeavour in intellectual

and spiritual matters)—these are the fundamental notions of his speech, which, despite its inflated phraseology concerning morality, is infused with an ardent desire for the uplifting of mankind. But even on these upper levels, the idealogue cannot shake off the trammels of politics; even into this sphere of the timeless, he brings with him his splenetic rancour, and he makes personal attacks. He speaks vindictively of the dead, of those whom he has himself sent to the guillotine; he derides Danton and Chaumette, the victims of his own policy, as contemptible examples of immorality and godlessness. Then, with a blow which strikes home, he attacks the apostle of atheism who as yet has escaped his wrath, Joseph Fouché: "Tell us, then, tell us who commissioned you to announce to the people that God does not exist, you, who are so devoted to that doctrine? What will it profit you to persuade man that a blind force presides over his destiny and deals out equal measure to crime and to virtue; to persuade man that his soul is nothing but a gentle breeze which dies away at the gate of the tomb? . . . Unhappy sophist, what right have you to snatch from innocence the sceptre of reason in order to entrust it to the hands of crime; to spread a funeral pall over nature, reducing misfortune to despair, filling crime with joy, making virtue sad, degrading humanity? . . . A villain, contemptible in his own eyes and horrible in the eyes of others, feels that nature cannot make him a more splendid gift than annihilation."

Robespierre's fine speech is received with a hurricane of applause. The Convention feels that it has been

lifted above the lowlands of the daily struggle, and unanimously agrees to inaugurate the festival proposed by Robespierre, the festival in honour of the Supreme Being. Joseph Fouché bites his lips in silence. No answer can be made to such a triumph on the part of the adversary. He knows himself to be incapable of countering this masterly rhetoric. Pale and wordless, he has to accept the public reproof, but he does so with an inward determination to avenge the insult.

For a few days, for a few weeks, nothing more is heard of him. Robespierre thinks that his account has been settled, that a contemptuous kick has sufficed to curb his impudence. But when nothing is to be seen or heard of Fouché, this means that he is at work under ground, like a mole, tenacious of purpose. He is visiting members of the Committee of Public Safety; he is cultivating the friendship of the deputies; he is trying to win the favour of all and sundry. Especially does he cultivate the Jacobins, who can be influenced by a smooth and supple tongue, and have been impressed by his activities in Lyons. No one has a clear conception of what he wants or what he is planning, this man who remains inconspicuous, though he goes so busily to and fro, spinning his web.

But what he has been working for all this time is suddenly made plain when, on the eighteenth Prairial, by a wellnigh unanimous vote, to the surprise of all and especially of Robespierre, Fouché is elected president of the Jacobin Club.

Robespierre is startled. No one could have anticipated

so audacious a move. He realizes at last that in Fouché he has an adversary no less cunning than bold. It is two years now since anyone whom he has publicly attacked has ventured to make a stand. A hostile glance from him had been enough to put his enemies out of action: Danton had fled to his country seat; the Girondists had scattered into the provinces; others, remaining in Paris, had not dared to show themselves in the streets. Now this insolent fellow, whom in the Convention he has openly stigmatized as a black sheep, has sought refuge, where? In the holy of holies, in the innermost sanctuary of the revolution, in the Jacobin Club, there craftily to secure the highest dignity obtainable by a patriot. For it is necessary to emphasize the fact that during the last year of this phase of the revolution the Club acquired overwhelming moral influence. Acceptance as one of its members signified that the fortunate nominee had passed the uttermost tests and was made of gold without alloy, whereas rejection (and, still more, expulsion) was tantamount to consigning a man to the guillotine. Generals and political leaders bowed their heads in reverence before this assize, which had come to be regarded as the supreme civic authority, hallowed with almost archiepiscopal sanctions. Or, perhaps, it would be better to describe the members of the Jacobin Club as the Prætorian Guard of the revolution, as the innermost defenders of the anointed rulers. And now these Prætorians, these most rigid and stalwart of all the republicans, have elected Joseph Fouché as their chief! Robespierre is beside himself with wrath. In the broad light of day, the

rascal has broken into his realm, his private domain, the place where he denounces his foes and where he is wont to fortify his position in the circle of tried and trusted adherents. Henceforward, when he wants to make a speech, is he, Maximilien Robespierre, to beg leave of Joseph Fouché, to woo the favour or yield before the displeasure of such a man as the deputy from Nantes?

He concentrates his forces. This defeat must be wiped out in blood. His enemy must forthwith be laid low; not merely dragged down from the presidential chair, but cast out of the society of the patriots. He hastens to put on Fouché's trail certain burghers of Lyons, who bring charges against the sometime proconsul; and when the latter, taken by surprise and always at a disadvantage in an open warfare of words, makes a lame defence, Robespierre intervenes with a warning to the Jacobins not to allow themselves to be fooled by cheats. He is almost successful in overthrowing Fouché at the first onslaught. But Fouché, being president, is able to closure the debate. Having done so, he makes an inglorious retreat into obscurity, to prepare a new attack.

Robespierre, however, has been forewarned. He has learned his opponent's fighting method; he knows that Fouché refuses open battle, and always withdraws into the shadows, whence he hopes to stab his adversary in the back. It does not suffice to defeat so persevering an intriguer, and to force him to run away; he must be followed into his hiding-place, and crushed for ever.

Knowing this, Robespierre returns to the assault. He demands that Fouché shall appear at the next meeting

of the Jacobin Club, there to justify himself. Naturally Fouché is unwilling. He knows where his strength and where his weakness lies, and he does not propose to give Robespierre the chance of triumphing over him in public, of humiliating him before the eyes of three thousand men. Better stay in the dark; better accept a momentary defeat, and thus gain precious time! He therefore writes a civilly worded letter to the Jacobins, deploring that for the moment he must refrain from a public exculpation. Will not the Club do better to postpone the discussion until the two Committees have passed judgment upon his conduct?

Robespierre pounces on this letter as a cat upon a mouse. Now he can make an end of Joseph Fouché! His speech of the twenty-third Messidor (June 11th) is the fiercest, the most formidable, the most venomous attack ever made by him on an adversary.

The opening words are enough to show that Robespierre is out not merely to defeat but to kill, not merely to humiliate but to destroy. He begins with simulated calm. He says tepidly that "the individual" Joseph Fouché is of no interest to him. "I was at one time in fairly close touch with him because I believed him to be a patriot. If I denounced him here, it was not so much because of his past crimes as because he had gone into hiding in order to commit others, and because I believed him to be the ringleader of the conspiracy which we have to thwart. When I examine the letter which has just been read, I see that it was written by a man who, being charged with his offences, refuses to justify himself be-

fore his fellow-citizens. This is the initiation of a system of tyranny. One who refuses to be answerable to a society of the people, is one who attacks the institution of societies of the people. It is amazing that he who, in the days of which I speak, solicited the approval of the society, should disregard it when he has been denounced, and that he should seem (one might say) to implore the help of the Convention against the Jacobins." At this point, Robespierre lets his personal animus become apparent, and refers to Fouché's unpleasing looks in order to arouse prejudice. "Does he dread the eyes and the ears of the people? Is he afraid that his grim visage will make his crimes all too plain, that six thousand eyes fixed on his own will read his soul in them, will discover there the innermost thoughts which it is his nature to hide? Is he afraid lest his utterances should reveal the embarrassment and the contradictions of guilt? Any reasonable man must see that fear is the only possible explanation of Fouché's behaviour. Now, one who does not dare to meet the eyes of his fellow-citizens is an evil-doer. I summon Fouché to judgment here. Let him make answer and say whether he has upheld or we have upheld more worthily the rights of the representatives of the people, whether he has or we have more courageously crushed all the factions." Robespierre goes on to term Fouché "a vile and despicable impostor" whose conduct is an acknowledgment of his offence; makes sinister allusions to "men whose hands are stuffed with plunder and with crimes"; and concludes with a threat. "Fouché has characterized himself sufficiently. I have only made these remarks to

show the conspirators, once for all, that they will not be able to elude the watchfulness of the people."

Although this speech obviously heralds a death-sentence, the meeting follows Robespierre's lead. Without hesitation, the man so recently chosen president is expelled as unworthy to remain a member of the Jacobin Club.

Now Joseph Fouché is marked for the guillotine as a tree is marked for the axe. His expulsion from the Club means that he is branded, and Robespierre's fierce denunciation will be enough to ensure his being sentenced to death. He is like a man who wears a shroud though still alive. From day to day every one looks for news of his arrest, and he himself is in hourly expectation of it. He gives up sleeping in his own bed, being afraid that the officers of the law will come for him at night as they did for Danton and for Desmoulins; and he seeks harbourage from one friend or another—friends who must indeed be stout-hearted to help one who thus lies under the ban. Even to speak to him in public needs courage. His steps are dogged by men under Robespierre's orders, the police of the Committee of General Security, who report his every visit. He is encircled by invisible bonds, checked in his every movement, and already delivered over to the knife.

Of all the seven hundred deputies, he now stands in the greatest peril, and there seems to be no loophole of escape. He had made a last desperate attempt to clutch at safety—among the Jacobins. But Robespierre's fierce

hand has plucked him from his holds, and thenceforward his life hangs by a thread. What aid can he expect from the Convention, that flock of timid sheep, who submissively bleat "aye" whenever the Committee demands one of their number for the guillotine? Unresistingly they have handed over their earlier leaders to the revolutionary tribunal, surrendering one after another Vergniaud and Danton and Desmoulins, lest by resistance they should draw attention to themselves. Why should they make any difference in Fouché's case? Mute, anxious, perplexed, they sit on the benches, these men who were once so full of fire and of courage. Terror has weakened their nerves and subdued their spirits, until at last their wills are paralysed by the poison.

But one of the mysterious virtues of every poison is that it can bring healing if it be artfully distilled and if its hidden energies be concentrated. Thus it is that here, paradoxically, dread of Robespierre may bring salvation from Robespierre. A man becomes unpardonable when week after week, month after month, he has unceasingly inspired terror, when through arousing a perpetual sense of insecurity he has broken his fellows' spirits and palsied their wills. Never can mankind at large, nor yet a group of men, endure for long the dictatorship of one without coming to hate him. This hatred felt by the bound and muzzled is now fermenting everywhere beneath the surface. Fifty or sixty of the deputies who, like Fouché, no longer dare to sleep in their own quarters, bite their lips when Robespierre walks past them; and many are furtively clenching their fists at the very time when they are

hailing his speeches with acclamations. The longer the rule of the Incorruptible lasts and the harsher it becomes, the more passionate grows the masked antagonism of his domineering will. By degrees he has aroused the animosity of all the factions: the right wing, because he sent the Girondists to the scaffold; the left wing, because at his instigation the heads of the extremists fell into the sawdust; the Committee of Public Safety, because he has enforced his will upon it; the profiteers, because he has hindered them in the pursuit of gain; the ambitious, because he has blocked the paths of ascent; the envious, because he rules; and the conciliatory, because he will not come to terms. If it were possible to assemble these many-headed hates, these dispersed cowardices, into the impetus of a single will, if it were possible to combine them into one point thrusting into Robespierre's heart, then all would be saved, Fouché and Barras and Tallien and Carnot, all the dictator's unavowed foes. But to render this possible, the first requisite is to widen yet more the sphere of alarm and of mistrust, to intensify the tension resulting from Robespierre's rule. The sense of oppression and uncertainty aroused in the minds of the timid by his veiled threats must be made yet more unbearable; terror must become even more terrible; anxiety must be magnified into anguish: then perhaps the herd will pluck up courage to attack this one man.

That is where Fouché's work comes in. From early in the morning till late in the evening, he slinks from one deputy to another, talking in low tones about the new proscription which Robespierre is preparing. To each he

whispers, "You are on the list"; or, "It will be your turn next." In this way, working underground, he is soon able to increase anxiety to panic, for in face of Robespierre the Incorruptible, who poses as the elder Cato brought to life once more, very few of the deputies have clean consciences. One of them may have cooked his accounts; another may once have contradicted Robespierre; a third is perhaps loose in his relations with women: all these are crimes in the eyes of this republican puritan. A fourth may have been on friendly terms with Danton or with another of the hundred and fifty members of the Convention who have been sent to the guillotine; a fifth has once sheltered one of the proscribed; a sixth has received a letter from an émigré. In a word, every one of them trembles, every one of them feels that he may be the next victim; and not one of them considers himself to correspond to Robespierre's exalted ideals of civic virtue. Meanwhile Fouché, like the shuttle in a loom, moves busily to and fro, weaving new lengths of the web of mistrust and suspicion. But this is a dangerous game, for the web is as flimsy as a spider's, and a brusque movement on the part of Robespierre, nay, a mere word from the dictator, may rend it to pieces.

In few of the histories of these months of the French revolution, has sufficient stress been laid on the part thus played by Fouché in the conspiracy against Robespierre, and by the more superficial writers he is not even mentioned. History is almost invariably penned in accordance with the outward aspect of things, and for that reason those who describe the tumultuous closing days

of the Terror are apt to dwell exclusively on such incidents as the emotional conduct of Tallien, brandishing a dagger on the tribune and threatening to stab himself; the energy of Barras, who summons the troops; the accusing utterance of Bourdon: in a word they picture the figures in the limelight, the prominent actors in the great drama that came to a climax on the ninth Thermidor, and ignore Fouché. Certainly, during these days, he did not appear upon the stage of the Convention. He was in the wings, playing the more difficult part of manager in this desperate game of hazard. He called the scenes, and gave the actors their cues; as ever, he worked inconspicuously in the background, worked in the dark, where his true sphere of action lay. But even though historians have failed to recognize the importance of his rôle, one of his contemporaries and fellow-performers was fully aware of it. Robespierre was right when he openly declared Fouché "le chef de la conspiration."

For Robespierre, uneasy and suspicious by temperament, feels that secret forces are working against him. He senses it in the sudden flarings-up of opposition that occur in the Committees; and even more, perhaps, he detects it behind the excessive civility and over-acted obsequiousness of certain deputies whom he knows to be hostile. He is convinced that an attack on him is about to be made from an ambush; he knows the ringleader, "le chef de la conspiration"; and he is on his guard. He has feelers out in all directions. The police and his private spies report to him every footstep, every meeting, every

conversation of Tallien, Fouché, and the other conspirators. In anonymous letters, he is warned again and again, some of the writers urging him to declare an open dictatorship forthwith and to crush his foes before they can collect their forces. In order to confuse and befool these enemies, he now assumes a mask of indifference towards political power. He ceases to attend the sittings of the Convention, and absents himself from the meetings of the Committee of Public Safety. Book in hand, accompanied only by his great Newfoundland dog, he is to be seen walking the streets or strolling through the woods adjoining Paris, lips compressed while (he wishes people to believe) he meditates on the teachings of his favourite philosophers. Nothing would seem to be further from his thoughts than the delights of wielding authority and the dangers of his personal situation. But when he gets home in the evenings, he sits at his writing-table for hours, putting the last touches to his great speech. Meticulously he elaborates it, so that the manuscript shows innumerable corrections and amplifications; for this decisive oratorical effort, which is to destroy all his enemies at a single blow, is to come as a surprise—is to be incisive as an axe, full of rhetorical fire, sparkling with wit, and sharpened with hatred. It is to be an irresistible weapon, with which he will unexpectedly attack his foes, and make an end of them before they have time to rally. He cannot do enough to give it edge and point, polish and venom; and in this sinister occupation he allows the days to slip by.

But now there is no time to be lost, for the reports of

his spies tell ever more urgently of clandestine meetings. On the fifth Thermidor a letter from Fouché to his sister falls into Robespierre's hands, containing the significant passage: "I have nothing to fear from the calumnies of Maximilien Robespierre. . . . Soon you will learn the issue of this affair, which will redound, I trust, to the advantage of the Republic."

Thus Robespierre is warned, just before the climax. He sends for his intimate, Saint-Just, and the two are soon closeted together in the garret room in the Rue Saint-Honoré. There they discuss the time and the method of the counter-attack. On the eighth Thermidor, Robespierre will startle and paralyse the Convention with his speech. On the ninth, Saint-Just will demand the heads of their enemies—those of the refractory members of the Committee, and above all the head of Joseph Fouché.

The tension has become almost unbearable, so that the conspirators feel that the storm must burst. But they still hesitate to attack the mightiest man in France; the man who holds the reins of power; the man who wields the additional authority of an unblemished name. They are not yet sure of themselves; they are not numerous enough, resolute enough, daring enough, to declare open war against this titan of the revolution; and the more cautious among them falter, speaking of retreat and of conciliation. The conspiracy, so laboriously pieced together, is in danger of disruption.

At this moment destiny, more skilful than any writer

of fiction, throws a decisive weight into one of the trembling scales. Fouché is chosen to fire the mine. During these days he who is the quarry of all the hounds, he who is in hourly danger of the falling axe, has the extremity of private sorrow superadded to his political misfortunes. A cold, unfeeling, remorseless intriguer in public life, at home he is a tender husband and the most affectionate of fathers. He is devoted to his ugly wife, and even fonder of the baby girl born in the days of his proconsulate and named by him Nièvre in the market-place of Nevers. At this juncture the child falls sick, so that his troubles are greatly aggravated by anxiety for his darling. Hunted as he is by Robespierre, he is denied even the solace of joining his wife during the night watches by the dying girl's cot, for he dares not stay at home after darkness has set in. In the daylit hours, again, instead of listening to the pitifully failing breath, he must with weary feet hasten from one deputy to another—lying, begging, and conspiring in defence of his own life. Thus racked at heart and confused in mind does the unhappy man keep on the move throughout these burning July days (the hottest known for years), and cannot be at hand while his daughter suffers and dies.

On the fifth or sixth Thermidor the ordeal is over. The child is dead, and Fouché accompanies the little coffin to the cemetery. Such trials help to steel the nerves. He no longer dreads his own death, and he is now animated with the courage of despair. While the other conspirators are still hesitant, and would gladly postpone the struggle, Fouché, who has nothing more to lose than his life,

speaks the decisive word: "Tomorrow we must strike." This word is spoken on the seventh Thermidor.

The eighth Thermidor dawns—a day of note in the history of the world. From early morning, out of a cloudless sky the torrid July sun glares down into the unsuspecting town. Only in the Convention is there, from the first, unwonted excitement. The deputies stand in groups, whisper one to another in corners; and never before have the passages and the galleries been thronged with such a number of inquisitive spectators. The atmosphere of the hall is oppressive and sinister, for rumour has it that today Robespierre will call his enemies to account. Whence comes the report? Perhaps someone caught sight of Saint-Just the previous evening as he came away from his talk with Robespierre, and the Convention has grown only too familiar with the upshot of such secret interviews. Or perhaps Robespierre has somehow got wind of his adversaries' plans?

The conspirators, who are well aware of the dangers to which they are exposed, anxiously scan one another's faces, wondering whether any, and, if so, which, has let fall an unguarded word. Will Robespierre get ahead of them, or will they be able to muzzle him before he can speak? And "le marais"—the faint-hearted and untrustworthy deputies comprising the Marsh and forming the majority of the Convention—which side will they take? Will they protect or sacrifice the foes of the dictator? Unrest and uncertainty dominate the assembly, even as the sultry grey-blue sky lours over Paris.

Directly the sitting opens, Robespierre demands leave to speak. He is arrayed with the same care as on the day of the festival of the Supreme Being, for he wears the sky-blue suit and the white silk stockings that have become historic. Slowly, deliberately, with intentional ceremoniousness, he mounts the rostrum. Not now, however, as on the day of that solemn festival, does he hold a torch in his hands, for he carries instead, like a lictor's fasces, a great roll of papers—the manuscript of his speech. "If my name is written there," thinks each of the onlookers, "it may mean death," and suddenly the hum of conversation is stilled. From the garden and from the corridors, the deputies hasten to their seats, and all of them scrutinize eagerly this too-familiar narrow face, hoping to read something from its expression. But icy, impenetrable, self-contained, is the countenance of Robespierre as he slowly opens the fateful scroll. Before beginning to read it, he raises his short-sighted eyes, looks from right to left and from left to right, and then alternately up and down, taking in the whole assembly, to narcotize it with his cold and menacing stare. There they sit: his friends, who are few; the undecided who make up the bulk of the assembly; and the pusillanimous clique of the conspirators, who have planned his destruction. He looks them all in the face. But one of them is missing. One only of his foes is wanting in this momentous hour: Joseph Fouché. Yet it is strange. Only one name comes up in the discussion, the name of this absentee, Joseph Fouché. And that is the name round which the last, the decisive combat rages.

Robespierre's speech is prolix, and fatiguing. According to his usual custom, he lets the axe swing over the neck of unnamed persons, dilates upon conspiracies, refers to reprobates and criminals, speaks of treachery and of machinations—but does not specify any particular offender. All he is now aiming at is to hypnotize the assembly, and next day Saint-Just is to deliver the blow against the paralysed victims. His vague oration drags on for three hours; and when he at length winds up, the assembly is exhausted rather than alarmed.

At first, no one stirs a finger. Uncertainty broods over all. It is impossible to say whether the silence indicates defeat or victory. That cannot be known until after the discussion.

At length one of his satellites proposes that the Convention should order the speech to be printed, this implying unqualified approval. No opposing voice is raised. Cowardly, servile, and in a sense relieved that today there is no demand for new heads, new arrests, new self-determined reductions of their number, the majority vote in favour of the motion. Then, at the last moment, one of the conspirators thrusts himself forward (his name, Bourdon deputy from the Oise, belongs to universal history) and speaks against the printing of the speech. This one voice sets all the others free. Cowardice shrinks and dwindles, and is replaced by desperate courage. One after another blames Robespierre for being too vague in his explanations and threats. He ought, they say, to speak more clearly if he has accusations to bring against anyone. Within a quarter of an hour, the scene has

changed. Robespierre, the aggressor, has been put upon his defence; he waters down his speech instead of strengthening it, declaring that he had complained of no one and accused no one.

At this moment an insignificant deputy (otherwise of no account) shouts: "Et Fouché?" The name has been uttered, the name of the man whom Robespierre had stigmatized as the ringleader of the conspiracy, whom he had branded as the betrayer of the revolution. Now he can hit back; now, surely, he must hit back. But, strange and inexplicable as it seems, Robespierre evades the issue, and says: "I do not wish to concern myself with that matter now. I hear only the call of duty."

The reason for this evasive answer is one of the mysteries which Robespierre carries with him to the tomb. Why, when he knows that he is engaged in a struggle of life and death, does he thus spare his bitterest enemy? Why does not he destroy Fouché? Why does not he attack the only one of the conspirators who is absent from the hall? This would discharge the tension—for the others, anxious to save their skins, would certainly have sacrificed Fouché with little qualm? That last evening, according to Saint-Just, Fouché once more made advances to Robespierre. Was this a false statement, made for defensive purposes or was it true? Various witnesses declare that on one of these days they saw Fouché sitting on a bench beside Charlotte Robespierre, his former betrothed. Did he really try to persuade Charlotte to plead his cause with her brother? Is it possible that Fouché, to

save himself from the guillotine, had it in mind to betray his fellow-conspirators? Or was it that, in order to fill Robespierre with false confidence and to cover up the conspiracy, he was ready to feign repentance and devotion? Shifty as ever, was he inclined on this occasion as on a thousand others to have a foot in both camps? Was Robespierre the Incorruptible, being himself now in imminent danger, and simply in order to keep himself alive and in the saddle, prepared in this supreme hour to spare his most detested enemy? When, that last time in the Convention, he refrained from denouncing Fouché, was it because there was a secret understanding between the two men, or was it nothing more than an evasion?

We do not know. After all these years, Robespierre's figure is still in many respects shrouded in mystery, and the story of this impenetrable man will never be fully unravelled. We shall never know his last thoughts: whether he lusted for dictatorial powers on their own account, or was a true-hearted republican; whether he wished to save the revolution, or to hand it down as a heritage like Napoleon. No one ever learned his innermost thoughts, the thoughts of that night between the eighth and the ninth Thermidor.

For now the night has come which will decide his fate. It is suffocatingly hot, and the knife of the guillotine glitters in the moonshine. When it falls next day, will its keen edge sever the necks of Tallien, Barras, and Fouché, or will Robespierre's head fall into the basket? Not one of the six hundred deputies goes to bed that night; both

parties are arming for the last struggle. From the Convention, Robespierre has hastened to the Jacobin Club, and there, aquiver with excitement, by the light of guttering candles, he once more reads the speech which has been rejected by the deputies. Salvos of applause acclaim his utterances as usual, but for the last time; and he, full of gloomy presentiments, is not deceived because these three thousand thus acclaim him and throng round him. He calls the speech his testament. Meanwhile Saint-Just, his keeper of the seals, is at the Committee of Public Safety, where, until dawn, he strives desperately against Collot d'Herbois, Carnot, and the other conspirators, while, in the corridors of the Tuileries, the net wherein next day Robespierre is to be snared is being woven. Twice and thrice the threads, like those carried by a weaver's shuttle, pass to and fro from the Right to the Left, from the Mountain to the Marsh, until at length, when the grey light of morning comes, an understanding has been reached. Here Fouché appears on the scene once more, for night is his element, and intrigue is his true sphere of action. His countenance, rendered more pallid than ever by his anxieties, looks ghostly in the dimly lit spaces. He whispers, cajoles, promises, he alarms and threatens one person after another; he does not rest until the pact has been made. At length, in the small hours, all the adversaries are agreed to destroy him who is their common foe: Robespierre. Fouché can go to his well-earned rest.

He is absent from the sitting of the ninth Thermidor, as he had been absent from the sitting of the eighth. His

absence can do no harm, for his work is finished, the knots are tied, and the majority has fully decided that the man whose existence is a danger to them all shall not escape with his life. Hardly has Saint-Just begun to deliver the deadly speech he has prepared in denunciation of the conspirators, when Tallien intervenes, for part of the agreement has been that none of the most eloquent of those who are to be destroyed, neither Saint-Just nor Robespierre, is to be allowed to speak. They must be strangled before they can utter a word, before they can bring any accusations. With the ready compliance of the president, one orator after another mounts the rostrum; and when Robespierre speaks to defend himself he is shouted down—the repressed cowardice of six hundred unstable souls, all the hatred and the envy that have accumulated during weeks and months, being now hurled with concentrated force against the man before whom as individuals they have trembled. By six in the evening the issue is decided. Robespierre has been outlawed and consigned to prison. Vainly do his friends, the steadfast revolutionists, those who admire in him the inflexible and passionate spirit of the Republic, rescue him and carry him off to the Hôtel de Ville. During the night the troops of the Convention storm this acropolis of the revolution, and by two in the morning, four-and-twenty hours after Fouché and his associates had come to an agreement for his destruction, Maximilien Robespierre, yesterday the mightiest man in France, is lying drenched in his own blood and with a shattered jaw, across two benches in the anteroom of the Convention.

The great quarry has been hunted down, and Fouché is saved. Next afternoon, the tumbrils rattle off to the place of execution.

The Terror is over, but with it dies the fiery spirit of the revolution, and the heroic era is at an end. The hour has come for the legacy hunters, the adventurers, the profiteers, the seekers after booty, the men with double tongues, the generals, the money-makers, the hour of a new combination of political forces. Now has come, it may be supposed, the hour of Joseph Fouché.

When the tumbrils which bore Maximilien Robespierre and his associates were rattling slowly through the Rue Saint-Honoré to the guillotine, by the tragical road along which Louis XVI, Danton, Desmoulins, and countless other victims had been driven, noisily exultant crowds had assembled to see the show. An execution had once more become a popular festival. Flags and streamers waved upon the housetops, acclamations thundered from the windows, and a wave of delight rushed across Paris. When Robespierre's head fell into the basket, the great square resounded with a universal shout of exultation. The conspirators were amazed. Why did people rejoice so passionately at the execution of a man whom yesterday Paris, nay France, had venerated as a god? Still more were Tallien and Barras surprised when, as they made their way into the Convention, an excited crowd hailed them as tyrannicides, and as the champions who had made an end of the Reign of Terror. They were

astounded, for in laying this unquestionably able man low they had merely wished to rid themselves of one who was inconveniently self-righteous and kept too close an eye on their doings. None of the conspirators had thought of putting the guillotine out of action, or of ringing down the curtain on the Terror. But as soon as they realized that the mass executions had become extremely unpopular, and that they might win overwhelming favour for themselves by allowing it to be believed that they had been inspired by humanitarian and not by personal motives, they were quick to turn this convenient misunderstanding to account. Thenceforward they would maintain that all the violence and all the bloodshed of the revolution had been instigated by Robespierre, who could not plead for himself from the tomb. They, on the other hand, had always been the apostles of clemency, and had invariably been opposed to harsh and extreme measures!

What gives the ninth Thermidor its enduring significance in history is, not so much the overthrow of Robespierre and his execution on the following day, as the cowardly and lying attitude of his successors. Till then, the revolution had cheerfully shouldered all its responsibilities, and had unhesitatingly claimed every possible right; from now onwards it was willing to admit wrongdoing, and its leaders began to repudiate it. But every faith, every philosophy, is weakened in the mainspring of its energies as soon as it ceases to claim unrestricted rights, as soon as it can entertain a doubt of its own infallibility. Thus when Tallien and Barras, the paltry

victors of Thermidor, began to rail at their great forerunners Danton and Robespierre as assassins, and faintheartedly took their seats among the moderates who were the secret enemies of the Republic, they were not only betraying the spirit of the revolution but were unfaithful to their own poor selves.

Every one expected to see Fouché among them, since he had been the ringleader of the conspiracy and the most ruthless of Robespierre's enemies. Surely he who had been above all in danger, he who had been "le chef de la conspiration," was entitled to the lion's share of the spoils? But a strange thing happened. Joseph Fouché did not take his seat with the others on one of the benches of the Right, but continued to occupy his old place on the Mountain. There, among the radicals, he sat, wrapped in silence. Wonder of wonders, for the first time he was not to be found in the camp of the majority!

Why did Fouché thus arbitrarily isolate himself from his associates? The question was mooted at the time, and has often been asked since. The explanation is simple. He was shrewder than the others, and could see farther ahead. His keen political insight enabled him to appraise the situation more effectively than could Tallien and Barras, men of poor intelligence whom danger alone had endowed with fleeting energy. Fouché, however, the sometime professor of physics, was acquainted with the laws of motion. A wave, he knew, cannot stand still, but must either flow onward or else be reflected backward.

MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE

FROM A PAINTING BY JEAN DUPLESSI-BERTAUX

If the backward movement had now begun, if the reaction had set in, its progress would be continuous just as formerly had been that of the revolution; and the reaction, like the revolution, would proceed to an extreme, to the use of force. Then this hastily cemented alliance would be dissolved, and the victory of the reaction would involve the fall of all the champions of the revolution. When ruling ideas change, there is an accompanying change in the standards by which the deeds of yesterday are judged—and this change is perilous to the doers of yesterday's deeds. That which yesterday was regarded as republican duty and republican virtue (the shooting down of sixteen hundred men, for instance, and the plunder of the churches), will tomorrow be deemed a crime; the accusers of one day will be the accused of another. Fouché, who already has more than enough on his conscience, does not wish to share in the overwhelming blunder committed by the other Thermidorists (as those who brought about Robespierre's downfall now name themselves); he will not, like them, try to hang on behind the chariot of the reaction. No need to do this, seeing that, if the reaction gathers headway, it will sweep along everything and every one in its current. Prudence and foresight make Fouché remain true to the radicals, for he feels sure that ere long it is precisely the boldest who will be in the most deadly peril.

The event confirms his judgment. Wooing popularity, and hoping to strengthen the belief that they are humane beyond all precedent, the Thermidorists, hasten to offer

up the most energetic proconsuls: Carrier, who had had six thousand drowned in the Loire; and Joseph Lebon, who had been tribune in Arras. Fouquier-Tinville is also thrown to the wolves. To ingratiate themselves with the Right, they recall to the Convention the seventy-three expelled Girondists, becoming aware too late that by thus strengthening the reaction they have made themselves dependent on it. Now they are compelled subserviently to denounce Billaud-Varenne and Collot d'Herbois, collaborators in the overthrow of Robespierre. Collot is called to account for the happenings in Lyons, and this touches Fouché nearly. But Fouché is able to save himself by a craven repudiation of his joint responsibility (though every document in the case bore the signature of Joseph Fouché as well as that of Collot d'Herbois); and with equal mendacity he declares that when Robespierre the tyrant attacked him it was on the ground of his excessive lenity. By these wiles he actually humbugs the Convention for a time. He is able to sit in his place unmolested while Collot is sent to the "dry guillotine," this being a synonym for the deadly French penal settlement in the West Indian seas, where the prisoner succumbs a few months later. But Fouché is too clever to fancy himself secure after warding off this first attack. He knows that political passion is tenacious as well as vindictive, and that reaction no less than the revolution will continue to gorge itself on human flesh until its teeth have been drawn. The reactionaries will not stint from their revenge until the last of the Jacobins has been brought to assize and the Republic has been destroyed. He thinks

that there is only one way of saving the revolution, with which, through his own blood-guiltiness his fate is inseparably intertwined, namely, by renovating it; and he is convinced that the only hope for himself lies in the fall of the government. Being once more, just as he was the previous summer, in greater peril than anyone else, alone against all the powers-that-be, he opens a desperate campaign for his life.

Always when he is fighting for power and for his life, Fouché displays astounding energy. He sees that there is no legitimate way of preventing the Convention from continuing the persecution of the sometime Terrorists, so that the only means left open is the one so often successfully employed during the revolution: the Terror. On previous occasions, when the Girondists were to be done away with and when the King was to be sent to death, the more faint-hearted and cautious among the deputies (and among them Fouché himself, then still a conservative) had been intimidated by mobilizing the streets against the parliament, by summoning the working-class battalions with their proletarian strength and their irresistible impetus from the suburbs, and by hoisting the red banner of revolt on the Hôtel de Ville. Why not once again hurl this old guard of the revolution, the stormers of the Bastille and the men of the tenth of August, against the Convention now grown pusillanimous, and thus with the aid of their calloused fists gain the upper hand? Only a crude fear of revolt, of proletarian wrath, could adequately frighten the Thermi-

dorists; so Fouché determines to rouse the people of Paris, the broad masses, and to set them in motion against his enemies, his accusers.

Of course Fouché is too cautious to go into the working-class quarters in person, there to deliver revolutionary speeches, or, like Marat, at the danger of his life, to scatter revolutionary pamphlets and leaflets broadcast among the populace. He is not fond of coming into the open, and will always evade responsibility if he can. The art of which he is a master is not that of platform oratory, but that of inciting to action by whispering into people's ears. Furthermore, he is able to find a man suited to his purpose, a bold and resolute fellow, ready to take the centre of the stage, one in whose shadow Fouché can hide.

In Paris there lives at this time a man held of no account, François Noel Babeuf by name, self-styled Caius Gracchus Babeuf, an ardent republican, honest and straightforward, one of those men whose hearts are better than their heads. A man of lowly origin; at one time a land-surveyor and then a book-printer, he has but few ideas, and those primitive ones; but he cultivates them with virile passion, and fans them to a white heat in the furnace of genuine republican and socialist convictions. The bourgeois republicans, Robespierre not excepted, have been careful to ignore the socialistic and often bolshevistic ideas of Marat concerning equality of goods. By preference they have talked a great deal about liberty, and a great deal likewise about fraternity, but have said very little about equality, insofar as money and property are concerned. Babeuf takes up the half-discarded

thoughts of Marat, blows on them to revive their fire, and carries them like a torch through the proletarian quarters of Paris. Of a sudden this torch may well start a conflagration, so that within a few hours Paris and the whole country may be consumed in the blaze, for the common people are slowly beginning to realize that the Thermidorists, to gain their own ends, have betrayed the proletarian revolution. Fouché now takes up his station behind this Gracchus Babeuf. He does not go about openly arm in arm with the agitator, but secretly urges him on to stir up the people. He persuades Babeuf to write inflammatory pamphlets, and himself corrects the proofs. Thus only, he thinks, if the workers get into marching array, if once again the faubourgs send forth their thousands bearing pikes and beating drums, will the Convention be terror-stricken and induced to hold its hand. Only by terror, only by intimidation, can the Republic be saved; only by an energetic thrust on the part of the Left can this dangerous trend towards the Right be compensated. For so bold, so desperate a venture, who can serve Fouché better as file-leader than this respectable, sincere, and upright man? Behind his broad back, Fouché will be able to keep well out of sight. Further, Babeuf, who is proud to assume the name of Gracchus and to speak of himself as the tribune of the people, is highly honoured when the famous deputy Fouché takes counsel with him. In this man, says Babeuf to himself, we have still one last trustworthy republican, who has retained his seat on one of the benches of the Mountain, and who holds no truck with the "jeunesse

dorée" and the army contractors. So "Gracchus" lends a willing ear, and, guided from the background by Fouché's skilful counsels, he fulminates against Tallien, the Thermidorists, and the government.

But while Fouché can easily make a tool of the good-natured and simple-minded Babeuf, he cannot so easily humbug those against whom he has set Babeuf in motion. The members of the government speedily recognize whose hand has loaded the musket levelled against them, and in an open sitting of the Convention Tallien accuses Fouché of being Babeuf's rear-rank man. As always, Fouché has no hesitation about repudiating his ally, just as he had repudiated Chaumette among the Jacobins, and just as he had repudiated Collot in connexion with Lyons. He has, so he says, no more than a nodding acquaintance with Babeuf, and he disapproves of the fellow's extravagances. In a word, Fouché beats a prompt retreat. Once more it is his file-leader who has to bear the brunt, though the "conspiration des égaux" does not assume an active form till a year or more later, when Fouché has retired into obscurity. Then Babeuf is arrested, to die on the scaffold—for always others have to pay with their blood for the words and the policy of Fouché.

Fouché's bold counterstroke has miscarried, and all that he has achieved is to concentrate attention on himself once more. This is unfortunate, for it reminds the people of Lyons, and of the blood-drenched plain of Brotteaux. With renewed, with redoubled energy, the reaction hunts up accusers in the provinces where Fouché

had held sway. Hardly has he succeeded, with difficulty, in repelling the charges from Lyons, when fresh complaints come in from Nevers and Clamecy. More and ever more persistently is Joseph Fouché indicted with terrorism before the bar of the Convention. He defends himself craftily, vigorously, and not unsuccessfully. Even Tallien, his adversary, rallies to Fouché's aid, for Tallien is becoming alarmed at the growing power of the reaction, and he is beginning to tremble for his own head. But help comes too late. On the twenty-second Thermidor, 1795, a year and twelve days after the fall of Robespierre, at the close of a long debate, a definite charge is brought against Joseph Fouché on account of his terrorist acts. On the twenty-third Thermidor, his arrest is decreed. Just as the shadow of Danton stalked threateningly after Robespierre, so now the shadow of Robespierre stalks threateningly after Fouché.

Nevertheless (and our shrewd politician has counted on it), the year and more since Robespierre's death has made all the difference. During the final period of the Terror, denunciation meant the issue of an order for arrest, and arrest meant death. Brought overnight to the Conciergerie, the accused was tried next morning, and the same afternoon was sitting in the tumbril on the way to the guillotine. Today the law courts were no longer held in the iron grasp of the Incorruptible; the meshes of the law had grown larger, and an offender could slip through them if he were quick and supple. Fouché would not have been Fouché unless he, who had so often

escaped from perilous snares, had been able to evade so loosely woven a net as this. By various subterfuges he manages to avoid immediate arrest, so that he has time for a rejoinder, an exculpation—and time at this juncture is everything. Only let him get into the shadows, and he will be forgotten; only let him hold his tongue while others are shouting, and people will overlook him. Through all the years of the Terror, Sieyès had sat in the Convention without opening his mouth, and when asked later what he had been doing all the time, he answered with a smile: "J'ai vécu." So now Fouché, like many animals, shams dead that he may not be killed. If he can but keep alive during this brief period of transition, he will be saved once for all. With his customary flair for changes in the weather, he recognizes that the splendour and the power of the Convention can last only a few weeks more, or at most a few months.

Thus Joseph Fouché is able to save himself alive—and that is a great thing to do in these days! True, he saves nothing more than his life; not his name, nor yet his position, for he is not elected a member of the new assembly. Fruitless have been his overwhelming exertions. He has wasted an immense amount of passion and cunning, has displayed immense courage, and has been lavish in the art of treason. Yet all that he can show for it is the bare rescue of his life. He is no longer Joseph Fouché of Nantes, deputy of the people; no longer teacher among the Oratorians; he is nothing but a forgotten and despised man, without rank, without property,

without moment—a pitiful shadow, protected only by darkness.

For three years to come, no one in France mentions Joseph Fouché's name.

CHAPTER FOUR

MINISTER OF THE DIRECTORY AND OF THE CONSULATE

1799 – 1802

Has anyone ever composed a hymn of exile? Has any poet ever sung the glories of this power which moulds destinies, which uplifts those who have been cast down, which under the harsh stresses of loneliness reassembles in a new order the dispersed energies of the soul? Almost invariably, literary artists have been content to rail against exile as an interruption to the process of ascent, as a useless interlude, as a cruel disturbance in a man's career. But in the rhythm of nature, such enforced cæsuras are essential. No one knows the whole of life unless he knows its depths as well as its heights. Not until he has experienced reverses, is a man able to develop his capacities to the full.

Above all, a creative genius needs such a period of compulsory solitude, that he may become able, out of the depths of despair, to measure the altitude of the tasks that await him, and from the remoteness of his life as an outcast to scan the distant horizon towards which he must march. The most notable messages delivered to mankind have been delivered from exile. Those who fashioned the great religions of the world—Moses, Christ, Mohammed, and Buddha—had all to experience

the silences of the desert, to learn the lesson of living apart from their fellows, before they could utter the decisive word. Milton's blindness, Beethoven's deafness, Dostoeffsky's penal servitude, Cervantes' imprisonment, Luther's incarceration on the Wartburg, Dante's exile, and Nietzsche's self-imposed banishment to the ice-bound region of the Engadine—all these experiences, though they ran counter to the conscious will of those concerned, were in conformity with the inwardly felt requirements of their genius.

Even in the lower spheres of life, in the mundane, the political world, a temporary exclusion from active life gives a statesman new freshness of vision, enabling him to think things over quietly and to reckon up the forces in the political game. Nothing, therefore, can be more advantageous to a career than its transient interruption, for one who has seen the world only from the heights, from the summit of an ivory tower and from the upper levels of authority, knows only the smiles of the obsequious and their dangerous readiness to serve; and one who always has the disposal of things within his own competence, forgets their true significance. Nothing weakens an artist, a military commander, a ruler, more than the unceasing capacity to do whatever he pleases. It is by failure that the artist first learns his true relationship to his work; it is by defeat that the military commander is taught his own shortcomings; it is in a period of compulsory retirement that the statesman acquires comprehensive and trustworthy political insight. The perpetual enjoyment of wealth makes people soft;

unceasing applause makes them stupid: periods of interruption are requisite to provide fresh tension and new creative elasticity. Nothing but misfortune can give a wide and penetrating outlook into the realities of the world. This may seem a harsh doctrine, but in truth every period of exile is a period of tuition in which one who has grown soft has his will steeled, in which the hesitant becomes resolute, and the man who is already hard grows harder still. For those, at any rate, endowed with true strength, exile can never lessen it, but only fortify their powers.

Joseph Fouché's exile lasts more than three years, and the lonely, inhospitable island to which he is sent is known as Poverty. Yesterday still proconsul and collaborator in shaping the fate of the revolution, he is cast down from the high places of power into such obscurity, into such sordid surroundings, that it is almost impossible to discover his traces. The only record of him we have during these days is from Barras, who gives a distressing picture of the pitiful garret where Fouché dwelt with his wife and two sickly children, red-haired and extremely ill-favoured. Here, five stories up, in this room under the roof, sometimes damp and musty and sometimes stiflingly hot, he must house his fallen fortune—the man before whose word thousands have trembled, and who within a few years will help to guide the destinies of Europe. Now, he cannot tell from day to day how he will be able to buy milk for his children, how he will be able to pay his rent, and how he can hope

to defend this poverty-stricken existence from countless unseen foes, the avengers of Lyons.

No one—not even Madelin—can tell us how Fouché earned his livelihood during these years of penury. He no longer had a salary as deputy and such property as he had acquired by inheritance had been lost in the San Domingo rising. His friends had forsaken him and no one was willing to extend a helping hand or to offer employment to "le mitrailleur de Lyon." He was reduced to the strangest, the most ignominious occupations, and it is not a mere fable that the future Duke of Otranto was at one time a swineherd. An even more unsavoury job followed, that of acting as spy for Barras, who alone among the new rulers of France proved compassionate and continued to admit the outcast to his presence. Not, indeed, in the ministerial audience chamber, but in some out-of-the-way corner, where the man of might would throw to Fouché (a sturdy beggar) some little alms. It took the form of a commission to nose into a suspect department of the army administration; or of a little tour of inspection, unofficial and poorly paid, but providing enough to enable the destitute man to keep his head above water for another fortnight. After all, however, these were avocations in which Fouché's peculiar talents had a fine opportunity to display themselves. For Barras was already brimming over with political schemes. He mistrusted his colleagues, and could turn a private detective to good account—a mole burrowing underground, a spreader of rumour, able and willing when necessary to play the part of provocative agent. Fouché was emi-

nently fitted for such a rôle. Eavesdropping and spying were a delight to him; he had a talent for making his way into people's houses by the back staircase; he encouraged all and sundry to tell him the latest scandal; and he zealously carried to his employer the besoiled outcome of these sweepings and pryings and gossipings. With the growth of the latter's ambition, with the strengthening of his determination to effect a coup d'état, Fouché became a more and more necessary tool. From the first, in the Directory (the council of five which now ruled France), Barras had been hampered by the presence of two honest men, and especially by that of Carnot, the most upright among the notable figures of the French revolution. Of these two, he had resolved to disembarrass himself. But one who is planning a coup d'état and wishes to inaugurate a conspiracy needs, before all, unscrupulous go-betweens, men-of-all-work as conscienceless as an Italian bravo, men without a character and yet dependable. Who could fulfil such requirements better than Joseph Fouché? This period of "exile" schooled him for his career, and cultivated the talents that were to prove of immense value to him when he became Minister of Police.

After an almost interminable night of cold, poverty, and darkness, Fouché sees the light dawning in the sky. A new lord is rising to power, one to whom he will pay willing service. This new lord is: Money. Hardly have Robespierre and the other terrorists been laid to rest, when money undergoes resurrection, becomes all-

powerful, and has once more numberless toadies and thralls. As before the revolution, the streets are full of fine carriages drawn by well-groomed horses resplendent in new harness; and on the cushioned seats are charming women in costly silks and muslins—dresses so scanty that some of the wearers seem almost as naked as Greek goddesses. Gilded youths ride in the Bois, wearing yellow, brown, or scarlet frock-coats and tight-fitting white nankeens. In their beringed right hands they carry elegant gold-knobbed riding-whips, which they are glad to use now and again to belabour the once so dreaded terrorists. The perfumers and the jewellers do a roaring trade. Five hundred, six hundred, a thousand dancing-halls and coffee-houses appear like magic. Villas are built, houses bought and sold; theatres are packed; speculation and betting are ripe; gambling for high stakes goes on behind the damask curtains of the Palais Royal. Money is afoot once more, autocratic, bold, defiant.

Where was the money, then, in France between 1791 and 1795? It was there all the time, though in hiding. Just as in Germany and Austria during 1919, when the spectre of communism stalked through the land, so in revolutionary France the wealthy were shamming dead, and were rigged out in threadbare garments—for in the year of Robespierre anyone who showed a taste for luxuries was accounted (in Fouché's phrase) "un mauvais riche," and immediately became an object of suspicion. Whoever was deemed rich was likely at best to be made extremely uncomfortable. But today, as under the old regime, only the rich mattered. By good luck at this

juncture there came along, as always in times of chaos, splendid opportunities for enrichment. A restratification of property was taking place; estates were changing hands, and money stuck to the fingers. The possessions of the émigrés were being brought under the hammer, and here were further chances of acquiring wealth. The assignats were depreciating in value from day to day, as inflation ran its frenzied course; and speculation in the currency was often lucrative. People with nimble fingers and clutching hands could, if they had a pull with the government, find abundant scope for amassing a store. But the most splendid possibilities of all were opened up by the war. At the very outset, as early as 1791, a few had discovered (as a few discovered in 1914) that war, the devourer of men and the destroyer of values, could nevertheless be made profitable; but in those days Robespierre and Saint-Just, both incorruptible, had been alive, ever watchful, and ready to seize "accapareurs" by the throat. Now (thanks be!) these Catos had been dealt with, and the guillotine was rusting in its shed. Golden prospects had dawned for army contractors and other profiteers. It was easy now to supply bad boots in exchange for good money, to fill one's pockets to bursting with advances and requisitions. Provided, of course, that the necessary contract could be secured! Men of business who wanted to get rich quickly along these lines must find the right intermediary, one who would unobtrusively open for the speculator the door leading into the State treasury, one who had access

to the inner ring of those who controlled the supply of the requisites for war.

Joseph Fouché has become the ideal man for these sordid negotiations. Poverty has made a clean sweep of his republican convictions, he has hung up his contempt for money to dry in the chimney, and he is so hungry that he can be bought cheaply. On the other hand, he has the best possible "relations," has the entry at headquarters, for, as a spy he goes whenever he pleases into the anteroom of Barras, the president of the Directory. Thus it is that betwixt night and morning, the revolutionary communist of 1793, the man who had inaugurated the "pain de l'unité," becomes the familiar of the newly baked republican bankers, and, for a consideration, fulfils their wishes and attends to their business. For example, the arrivist Hinguerlot, one of the most impudent and unscrupulous profiteers of the Republic (a man who subsequently incurs the fierce hatred of Napoleon), has had a vexatious charge brought against him. He has opened his mouth rather too wide, and in connexion with some army contracts has filled his pockets fuller than is seemly. A prosecution is imminent, which will cost him a great deal of money, and perhaps his head. What do people do in such a situation (it was the same then as now)? They apply to someone who has access to people in high places, someone who has a political or a private pull, and can "accommodate" the tiresome affair. Hinguerlot, therefore, applies to Fouché, Barras's tale-bearer, who runs hot-foot to the man of

power (you can read the story in Barras's memoirs), and is actually able to get the proceedings stifled. Thereupon the grateful Hinguerlot gives Fouché a look-in in army contracts and speculations on the Bourse, and, as may be expected, Fouché's appetite grows by what it feeds on. Our friend discovers in 1797 that money has a much more agreeable smell than blood had in 1793. Being now in touch with high finance on one side as well as with the corrupt government on the other, he is able to found a new company to supply the needs of Scherer's army. The worthy general's soldiers will get their feet wet in their badly made boots and will shiver in their shoddy overcoats; they will be defeated on the plains of Italy; but the main object of the Fouché-Hinguerlot company will be achieved, for it will earn satisfactory profits, of which Barras will probably touch a share. Vanished now is the detestation of the "vile and corrupting metal," of which Fouché the ultra-Jacobin and super-communist wrote so eloquently only three years before; forgotten, too, the venomous outbreak against the "mauvais riches"; forgotten that "the good republican needs nothing more than bread and iron and forty crowns of income"; the slogan now is "enrich yourselves at last." In exile, Fouché has learned the power of money, and he serves money as he will serve any power. Too long and too painful has been his experience as under-dog, his experience of poverty and dirt, of contempt and deprivation. Now he strains all his energies to become one of the top-dogs. He will climb into that world where power can be bought for money, and where

power in turn can be coined into more money. He has driven the first adit into this richest of all mines; he has taken the first step on the wonderful road from a fifth-story garret to a ducal seat, from destitution to a property worth twenty millions of francs.

Having jettisoned the inconvenient ballast of revolutionary principles, Fouché has become mobile. He promptly gets his foot in the stirrup once more. His friend Barras has other occupations besides shady financial transactions. An unsavoury political deal is in prospect. Under the rose, Barras designs to sell the Republic to Louis XVIII, in return for a ducal title and a large sum of money. The chief obstacle is that some of his colleagues, like Carnot, are honest men who still believe in the Republic and cannot be made to understand that the only use of ideals is to turn them to personal advantage. In the coup d'état of the eighteenth Fructidor, whereby Barras rids himself of the troublesome watch-dog Carnot, Fouché's mining operations must unquestionably have been of great help to his business associates, for hardly has Barras become supreme head of the Council of Five, the new Directory, than Fouché emerges from the shadows in all haste to demand his price. Barras must give him a post; in political life, in the army, somewhere, anywhere, so long as it is a place where Fouché can fill his pockets and recuperate after the years of poverty. Barras, who needs his services, is not in a position to refuse. Nevertheless, the name of Fouché, "le mitrailleur de Lyon," still reeks of blood, and, in the honeymoon of the reaction, even the dictator

does not dare to compromise himself, in Paris, by too open an association. Barras therefore dispatches Fouché as representative of the government, first to the army in Italy, and then to the Batavian Republic in order to carry on secret negotiations in Holland. The dictator knows full well that Fouché is master in the work of underground intrigue, and ere long he will know it better still from sad personal experience.

In 1798, then, Fouché becomes an envoy of the French Republic. He is in the saddle once more! In this diplomatic mission he displays the same frigid energy that he had formerly displayed in his mission of blood, so that in Holland he is quickly and marvellously successful. Mellowed by his tragical experiences, ripened by these stormy times, hammered into shape upon the anvil of poverty, Fouché has retained his old power for vigorous action, but has coupled it with enhanced caution. His new masters are quick to recognize that this is a man who can be used, one who dances wherever the wind blows him, and leaps to any spot where money is to be found; one who is pliable towards those placed in authority over him, but relentless towards subordinates. He will be a good seaman to have on board the ship now that the waves run high. For the ship of government is navigating troubled waters, and seems in danger, every moment, of running on the rocks. On the third Thermidor, 1799, therefore, the Directory comes to an unexpected decision. Joseph Fouché, then engaged on a secret mission to Holland, is appointed Minister of Police to the French Republic.

Joseph Fouché a minister of State! Paris is startled as if by a cannon shot. Is the Terror to begin over again? Is that why they have unleashed this bloodhound, the mitrailleur of Lyons, the desecrator of the Host and the plunderer of churches, the friend of the anarchist Babeuf? Do they propose (may God forfend!) to set up the guillotine once more in the Place de la République? Will they resume the baking of the "pain de l'unité," and re-establish the philanthropic committees to seize the wealth of the rich? Paris, which has been peacefully enjoying itself for some years now, with its fifteen hundred dancing-halls, its dazzling shops, and its "jeunesse dorée," is alarmed and horrified; the well-to-do and all worthy cits tremble as they did in the year 1792. Only the Jacobins are pleased, the last of the republicans. They rejoice because, at length, after the terrible persecutions they have endured, one of their own folk is again in power, the boldest, the most radical, the most unyielding of them all. At length a term is to be put to the reaction, and the Republic is to be cleansed of the royalists and the conspirators!

But within a few days, both parties, the terrified and the delighted, are asking themselves whether this Minister of Police can really be named Joseph Fouché. Once more has become evident the truth of Mirabeau's wise saying (which applies to our socialists today) that Jacobins who become ministers are no longer Jacobin ministers. So it is now; for see, the lips which used to breathe threatenings and slaughter are full of conciliation. Order, tranquillity, security; these words perpetually recur in

the proclamations of the ex-terrorist, and to fight anarchism seems to be his first care. The liberty of the press must be restricted, and there must be an end of inflammatory speeches. Order, order, tranquillity and security! No Metternich, no Seldnitzki, no arch-reactionary of the Austrian Empire, ever composed more conservative decrees than Joseph Fouché, "le mitrailleur de Lyon."

The good burghers breathe freely once more. What a gentle Paul has this Saul now become! But the convinced republicans seethe with indignation at their meetings. They have learned little during these years. As of old, they talk and talk and talk. They threaten the Directory, the ministers of State, and the constitution with quotations from Plutarch. They behave as rabidly as if Danton and Marat were still alive; as if still, as in those brave days of the revolution, they could with the sound of the tocsin summon hundreds of thousands from the faubourgs. All the same, their fierce recriminations are a nuisance, and end by making the Directory uneasy. "What had we better do about it?" inquired the colleagues of the newly appointed Minister of Police.

"Close the club," answers the imperturbable. They look at him incredulously, and inquire when he proposes to take this bold step.

"Tomorrow," answers Fouché quietly.

In very truth, next evening Fouché, formerly president of the Jacobin Club, betakes himself to the radical

club in the Rue du Bac. Here throughout the years of the reaction the heart of the revolution has continued beating. Here are to be found the very men to whom Robespierre, Danton, Marat, and Fouché himself used to make impassioned speeches. Since the fall of Robespierre and the defeat of Babeuf, the memory of the stormy days of the revolution has been kept alive only in the Club du Manège.

But Fouché has no use for sentimentality, and can, whenever he likes, forget his past with formidable speed. The ex-professor of mathematics and physics among the Oratorians, when he measures the parallelogram of forces, takes only real forces into account and is not concerned with ideal ones. He knows that the day of effective republican ideas is over, and that the best republican leaders, the men of action, lie mouldering under the sod. The clubs have long since ceased to be anything more than talking-shops where people re-echo one another's phrases. In this year 1799, quotations from Plutarch and patriotic tags are, like the assignats, a depreciated currency; too many slogans have been uttered, just as too many banknotes have been printed. Who knows better than the Minister of Police, the controller of public opinion, that France is weary of the lawyers and the orators and the innovators, weary of decrees and statutes. All that the country wants now is tranquillity, order, peace, and stable finances. Invariably after a few years of revolution, as after a few years of war, after anything which has led to an ecstatic outburst of com-

munity feeling, the irresistible egoism of the individual and of the family comes once more into its own.

That very evening a republican, one of these "depreciated banknotes," is making an inflammatory speech, when the door is thrust open, and Fouché in his ministerial uniform enters, accompanied by gendarmes. As the members of the club spring to their feet, he sizes them up with his coldly observant gaze. What a poor lot they are in the way of adversaries! The real effectives of the revolution, its spiritual heroes, and its desperados, have long since been laid to rest. Only the chatterers remain, and one resolute gesture will suffice to scatter them to the winds. Without hesitation, he strides up to the platform, and mounts it. For the first time now after six years the Jacobins hear his chilly tones once more, but not as formerly voicing the praises of liberty and inciting to hatred against despots, for now this lean-visaged man declares in the fewest possible words that the club is closed. So great is their astonishment, that no one makes a word of protest, no one offers the slightest resistance. They have always sworn war to the knife against the enemies of liberty, but they do not make their words good tonight. They merely slink away in silence. Fouché has made no mistake. Men worthy of the name must be fought, but chatterers can be put to flight with the wave of the hand.

When the hall is empty, he walks quietly out of it, and locks the door behind him. Substantially, this turning of the key by Fouché signifies the close of the French revolution.

An office is what its holder can make of it. When Joseph Fouché becomes Minister of Police, he is accepting what has hitherto been a subordinate position, that of sub-prefect as it were to the Ministry of the Interior. He is appointed to act as a sort of watchman and informer, as a collector of materials which will be useful to his masters in the Directory, those kings who guide home and foreign affairs. But by the time Fouché has been in office no more than three months, his patrons note with alarm that his observant eyes are directed upwards as well as downwards, that the Minister of Police is supervising the other ministers of State, the Directory, the generals, and the whole public policy. All the officers are caught within the meshes of his net; all news passes through his hands; he has a policy of his own apart from public policy, and wages a war of his own apart from the war waged by the country. Thus he continually extends the limits of his competence, until at length Talleyrand defines Fouché's position in the following terms: "The Minister of Police is a man who minds his own business —and goes on to mind other people's."

Fearfully and wonderfully made is this complicated machine, this apparatus for supplying universal information concerning French affairs. Each day, items of intelligence stream by thousands into the house on the Quai Voltaire, for within a few months this master of his craft has filled the whole country with spies and provocative agents. But the reader must not conceive of Fouché's minions as being nothing more than detectives of the ordinary kind, the sort of men who glean their tale of gos-

sip day by day from the concierges, and pick up whatever they can in tavern, brothel, and church. Many of Fouché's agents are diplomatists and ladies of fashion who converse amiably one with another in the salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, while at other times, rigged out as patriots, they make their way into the secret meetings of the Jacobins. On the list of persons in his pay are to be found marquises and duchesses, bearing the most famous names in France; and he can even boast of having in his pay one who a few years later, as Josephine Bonaparte, is to become the greatest lady in the land. In the office of the man who is in due time to be his lord and emperor, the secretary is his creature; and, at Hartwell in England, the cook of King Louis XVIII is one of his paid agents. All current gossip comes to his ears, and every letter is opened on its way through the post. His ears are everywhere: in the armies at the front, among the men of business, among the deputies, in every drinking-booth and at every meeting. Thus a stream of miscellaneous information, part true and part false, part mere malicious denunciation, flows into his office, where it is sifted and resifted until trustworthy intelligence emerges.

For trustworthy intelligence is the thing of supreme importance—in war as in peace, in politics no less than in finance. In the France of 1799, not terror but knowledge holds sway. Knowledge concerning each of these sorry Thermidorists, how much money he rakes in, by whom he has been bribed, for what sum he can be bought so as to be held in check, and how in this way the superior

can be transformed into a subordinate. Knowledge about conspiracies, partly in order to frustrate them, and partly in order to promote them, so that in politics Fouché can be sure of being able to sail upon the right tack. Advance information concerning the operations of the war and the negotiations for peace, so that he can deal successfully on the stock exchange through the instrumentality of subservient financiers, and at length acquire a substantial fortune. Thus it is that this news-machine in Fouché's hands goes on coining money and more money and yet more money, while at the same time the money serves as a lubricant to keep the whole thing working silently and efficiently. From gaming-houses, brothels, and banks, millions flow into his hands, to be used by him for bribery, which will bring further information. The huge and elaborate machine is kept at work unceasingly—the machine which the new Minister of Police has created out of nothing within a few months, thanks to his amazing capacity for work and his psychological genius.

But the most brilliant feature in this incomparable machine is that it will function only in the hands of its maker. Remove one or two screws and levers (the secret of which is known only to the inventor), and the busy movement ceases. From the first day of his appointment, Fouché begins to provide for the possibility of dismissal. Should this misfortune occur, he will, as he departs, put the whole structure out of gear. When in power, he does not work for the State, does not work for the Directory or for Napoleon, but for himself. When he distils the

diversified information in his retorts, it is not with any intention of handing over, as in duty bound, every drop of the essence to his chiefs. Guided, as always, by his unflinching selfishness, he transmits only what he thinks fit. Why should he make those blockheads in the Directory any wiser than they need be, and thus enable them to see his cards? Nothing shall pass out through the door of his laboratory unless its disclosure to his employers is advantageous to his own schemes, is directly profitable to himself. The rest of the arrows he has sharpened and the poisons he has prepared will be carefully stored in his private arsenal till they can be used for personal vengeance and political assassination. Fouché always knows a good deal more than the Directory knows that he knows, and this makes him at once dangerous and indispensable. He knows about Barras's negotiations with the royalists; about Bonaparte's ambition to wear a crown; and about the intrigues of both Jacobins and reactionaries: but, having learned these secrets, he keeps them to himself until their revelation will serve his turn. Sometimes he gives conspiracy a free hand, and sometimes prefers to put a spoke in its wheels; now and again, he will actually foster it. Often he will effusively and noisily make a plot publicly known while simultaneously warning the plotters, so that they may have time to seek cover. He always plays a double, triple, or quadruple game, until to befool his associates becomes by degrees his ruling passion. Of course all this makes extensive demands upon his time and energies, and he is not grudging in their expenditure, for he is not an eight-

hour-day man. He is at his desk from early till late, scrutinizing all papers himself, and subjecting all decisions to his personal initiative. Every important accused person is examined by him privately, so that not even his most immediate underlings shall become acquainted with the fundamental details; and in this way, as unbeneficed confessor to the country at large, he has every one's secrets pigeon-holed in his mind. He rules by terror, as in Lyons, but no longer by the terror of the swiftly falling axe; now he holds sway by means of a spiritual force, through his power of spreading anxiety and arousing a consciousness of guilt, through his capacity for making people feel that they are kept under observation and that their secret offences have been discovered. The machine of 1792, the guillotine, set a-going to crush resistance to the State, was but a clumsy contrivance when compared with the system of police espionage established by the master mind of Joseph Fouché in 1799.

Upon this instrument of his own making, Fouché plays as a supreme virtuoso. He has learned the innermost secret of power—to enjoy it unostentatiously and to use it sparingly. Gone are the days of Lyons, when the fierce soldiers of revolution were posted with fixed bayonets to keep away intruders. Now ladies from the Faubourg Saint-Germain throng the waiting-room of his office and are freely admitted to his presence. He knows what they have come for. One petitions for the removal of a relative's name from the list of émigrés; another

begs an important post for her cousin; a third wants to have a vexatious prosecution quashed. To all these visitors, Fouché is extremely amiable. Why should he make himself disliked by the adherents of any of the factions, by the Jacobins or the royalists, by the moderates or the Bonapartists, when he does not know which of them will be at the helm tomorrow? Influenced by this consideration, the once dreaded terrorist assumes a charmingly complaisant manner. Publicly, indeed, in his speeches and proclamations, he thunders against royalists and anarchists; but in private he gives them friendly warnings or bribes them in case of need. He avoids the holding of flamboyant legal proceedings, and prevents whenever possible the passing of death-sentences. Enough for him to make a forcible gesture which will save him from the necessity of actually using force, and to exercise under cover the real powers of the State while Barras and the others wear the trappings.

Thus it comes to pass that within a few months Fouché, hitherto regarded as the devil incarnate, makes himself widely popular: for everywhere and at all times that minister or statesman is a universal favourite who is easy of access; who looks on contentedly or perhaps even gives friendly help when money is to be earned or a comfortable post obtained; who makes concessions to all, and never frowns at people censoriously unless they interfere unduly in politics or do something which hinders the smooth working of his own schemes. When you wish to modify a man's convictions, surely it is better to corrupt or cajole him, than to set the cannon roar-

ing? Would-be disturbers of the peace can often be dealt with effectually by summoning them to a confidential audience and showing them that their death-sentence lies ready signed in a drawer. The threat will save the trouble of an execution. No doubt when disturbances actually begin, he can use the iron hand as of yore. But towards those who keep quiet and do not kick against the pricks, the terrorist of Lyons can show the priestly long-suffering which dates from an earlier incarnation. He knows that poor humanity has a weakness for money, for luxury, for sweet little vices, for private pleasures of one kind and another. Let be! Don't stir the waters without good cause. The bankers and financiers, who, under the Republic hitherto, have been worried to death, can now pull the strings of the money market and earn to their hearts' content: Fouché gives them useful tips, and is asked to accept a share of the spoil. Under Marat and Desmoulins the press was a savage watchdog always ready to bite: but now the dog wags its tail ingratiatingly, and fawns on him, for it too would rather taste cake than the whip. Within a brief space of time, the clamour of the patriots has been replaced by a silence that is broken only by the smacking of the lips of those to whom he has thrown juicy bones, while the rest have been driven into corners by a few contemptuous kicks. His colleagues, too, have learned—all parties have learned—that it is just as agreeable, just as lucrative, to have Fouché for a friend, as it is undesirable to harass him until he shows that there have been claws hidden behind the velvet pads. The upshot is that this man, till recently

an object of contumely, gains innumerable friends—because he knows all about their little ways, and binds them to him by his silence. Though there has not yet been time to rebuild the shattered city beside the Rhone, the mitraillades of Lyons have been forgotten and Joseph Fouché is beloved.

Concerning whatever happens in the realm, Joseph Fouché has the first and the best intelligence. A thousand heads are working for him, he sees with a thousand eyes and hears with a thousand ears, and for that reason he has a better insight than anyone else into all the crannies of events. No one knows so much as he about the strength or the weakness of parties and individuals throughout the country. In such matters no one can vie with this cold-blooded and keen-witted observer possessed of a registering apparatus which detects the most trifling oscillations of political life.

Things go on in this way for a few weeks, a few months, and it has become plain to Joseph Fouché that the Directory is doomed. The five men who compose it are at odds; each of them is playing his own game behind the others' backs, and each of them is only awaiting an opportunity to oust the others. The armies have been defeated, the finances are in disorder, the country is restless; Fouché senses that there will be a change in the wind ere long. He knows all about Barras's treasonable negotiations with Louis XVIII. The other Directors are casting sheep's eyes at the Duke of Orleans, or are dreaming of the re-establishment of the Convention.

They, too, are well aware that matters cannot go on like this much longer. The nation is seething with revolt, the assignats are not worth the paper on which they are printed, the soldiers are inclined to mutiny or to desert; unless some new energy is discovered to reassemble its scattered forces, the Republic will fall.

No one but a dictator can save the situation, and all eyes are searching for a man who will be equal to the occasion. "We need a head and a sword," says Barras to Fouché, privately convinced that he himself has the head, and wondering where he can find the necessary sword. But Hoche and Joubert, victorious generals both, have died at an unpropitious moment; Bernadotte is still too much inclined to play the Jacobin; and as for the one man whom all know to be both head and sword, Bonaparte the hero of Arcole and Rivoli, he has been sent as far as possible from the metropolis by the rulers who dread his ambition. He is manœuvring to no purpose in the sands of Egypt. He is a couple of thousand miles away. No use thinking about Bonaparte now.

Of all the ministers, Fouché alone knows at this moment that General Bonaparte, whom the others still suppose to be in the shadow of the Pyramids, is by no means so far away as that, and is about to land in France. They had sent him all that distance away from Paris because he was too popular and too much inclined to play the master. Probably they even drew a breath of relief when, at Aboukir, Nelson destroyed the French fleet—for what do intriguers and politicians care about the sacrifice of a

few thousand lives if thereby a competitor is swept out of their path? Now they can sleep quietly, for he is laid by the heels on the banks of the Nile, and it is very unlikely they would recall him even if they could. It never occurs to them that he will be so bold as to hand over his command to another general, that he may speed back and shake them out of their slumbers; they have reckoned with all the possibilities except with those inherent in Napoleon Bonaparte.

But Fouché is better informed, and from the most trustworthy of all sources. For the person who betrays everything to him, who shows him every letter, who brings him tidings of all Bonaparte's doings, the most reliable of the minister's paid spies, is no one else than the general's own wife, Josephine Beauharnais. It was no great matter to bribe this light-minded creole woman. Owing to her crazily spendthrift ways, she was always in urgent need of money. Even when, later, Napoleon was able to supply her free-handedly with hundreds of thousands out of the State treasury, the money disappeared like water in the sand, for she was a woman who wanted three hundred hats and seven hundred dresses a year, who could never safeguard anything, whether it was coin or her own body or her reputation, and who moreover at this moment was not feeling particularly well disposed towards her husband. While the hot-blooded general, who would so gladly have had her with him, was whiling away his time as best he could in distant Egypt, she had been enjoying herself at home with her handsome young lover Hippolyte Charles, and

probably with two or three other lovers as well, including presumably her old flame Barras. Those meddlesome brothers-in-law of hers, Joseph and Lucien, had taken her behaviour amiss, and had hastened to report it to Napoleon, who was as jealous as any Turk. Hence she stood in need of help, wanted someone who would spy upon these brotherly spies, and would keep watch on their correspondence. For such aid, and for a handful of gold pieces in addition (in Fouché's own memoirs we are told in plain words that the sum was a thousand louis d'or), the future Empress blabbed to Fouché her husband's secrets, including the most important and most perilous of them all: Bonaparte's imminent return.

Enough for Fouché that he himself has the news. Naturally the Citizen Minister of Police has no thought of informing his superiors. For the time being he cements his friendship with the pretender's wife, turns the information to his private uses, and, forewarned and forearmed as usual, awaits the upshot, which he knows cannot be long delayed.

On October 11, 1799, the Directory summons Fouché in all speed. Incredible news has come by semaphore. Bonaparte is back from Egypt, has landed at Fréjus, has come on his own initiative, without waiting to be recalled. What is to be done now? The general has left his army without being ordered to do so. Should he be arrested as a deserter, or should he be received courteously? Fouché, pretending to be as much astonished as the others are in reality, advises against strong measures. His

object is to gain time, for he has not yet made up his mind whether he will be for or against Bonaparte, and he wants to watch events taking their course. But while the five brainless rulers of France are still busily discussing whether Bonaparte is to be arrested or to be graciously welcomed, the voice of the people has long since spoken. Avignon, Lyons, Paris, receive this returning general like a Roman commander coming back for a triumph; all the towns are illuminated as he passes through; in the theatres, the news is told to jubilant audiences. Bonaparte does not come back as a subordinate, but as a master, as a great power. Hardly has he reached his home in the Rue Chantereine (soon to be renamed in his honour Rue Victoire), than his friends throng round him, accompanied by many others who deem it prudent to be regarded as his friends. Generals, deputies, ministers of State, even Talleyrand, pay their respects to the man of the sword, and naturally no long time elapses before the Minister of Police comes to call. Driving to the Rue Chantereine, he sends in his name to Bonaparte. But, so far as the general knows, this Monsieur Fouché is a visitor of no particular account. The Minister of Police is kept waiting for a good hour, as if he were no more than a tiresome office-seeker. Fouché's name means little to Bonaparte, who has never met him. The general probably remembers that there was a certain Fouché who had played a somewhat sanguinary part in Lyons during the years of the Terror. Perhaps he may have even encountered the man as a minor police spy, shabbily dressed and poverty-stricken, in his friend Barras's ante-

room. Certainly not a person of note, probably a man of business who has wormed his way into one of the lesser offices of State. Let him cool his heels for a while. In actual fact, then, Joseph Fouché waits patiently for a long hour, and would perhaps wait for a second or a third hour, were it not that Réal, one of Bonaparte's fellow-conspirators for the coming coup d'état, notices the man of power, of whom all Paris sought audience, in so humiliating a position. Horrified at the unlucky blunder, he bursts into the general's room and explains how disastrous it will be to put Fouché out of humour by keeping him waiting like this, a man able by a mere wave of the hand to blow the whole plot to smithereens. Thereupon Bonaparte hastens to the waiting-room, is profuse in his apologies, and brings Fouché back to his own study, where the two are closeted together in absolute privacy for two hours.

No doubt they scan one another intently, each wondering whether the other will be useful to him. We may be sure, too, that each of them is quick to recognize the other's outstanding qualities. Fouché will discern the unexampled dynamic energy of this man of might, and his invincible genius for domination; while Bonaparte, with the keen and all-embracing vision of an eagle, will perceive in Fouché an ideal assistant, one whose talent he can turn to account in all sorts of ways, one able to arrive at a speedy and comprehensive grasp of all the possibilities and able energetically to transform these possibilities into realized facts. In conversation twenty years afterwards at Longwood, Napoleon declared that

no one else had given him so concise and at the same time so exhaustive a survey of the situation of France and the Directory as had Fouché in this first talk. Moreover that Fouché, who was not usually distinguished for frankness, should on this occasion promptly have told the truth to the pretender to the throne, shows that he had made up his mind to put himself at Bonaparte's disposal. At the very first meeting their rôles were assigned. They were to be master and servant; shaper of the world's destinies and political intriguer. The stage was set and their collaboration could begin.

Thus from the outset Fouché confides in Bonaparte with unusual readiness. All the same, he does not put himself wholly into the other's hands. He takes no open part in the conspiracy which is to overthrow the Directory and install Bonaparte as autocrat; he is too cautious for that. Faithful to his lifelong principle, he will not commit himself until the issue has been decided. What happens is that, during the next few weeks, the Minister of Police, whose sight and hearing are as a rule so phenomenally keen, becomes afflicted with a distressing infirmity, is suddenly struck blind and deaf. He hears not a word of the rumours concerning the imminence of a coup d'état with which the town is filled, and he seems unable to read the letters which are put into his hands. His sources of information, whose flow has hitherto been so trustworthy, seem to have dried up as if by magic; and at a time when, of the five members of the Directory, two are already in the conspiracy and the third is half

won over, the Minister of Police has no inkling that a military conspiracy is afoot—or at any rate behaves as if he had no inkling. In his daily reports to the Directory, there is never a syllable about General Bonaparte and the clique of army men who are rattling their sabres impatiently. Still, he refrains from committing himself to Bonaparte by any written word. Only by his silence does he betray the Directory, only by his silence does he pledge himself to the pretender; and he waits, waits, waits. It is in such moments of tension, a minute or two before the final decision, that Fouché the amphibian feels most at home. To be dreaded by both parties, to be wooed by both, and to feel that thanks to him the scales are trembling without inclining definitely in one direction or the other—to this arch-intriguer, such a situation brings the intensest of all possible pleasures. What a fascinating game, incomparably more delightful in its tensions than gambling or love, this game in which, from moment to moment, some matter of vital importance to the world is hanging in the wind! To know during such tense minutes that one can hasten the movement of events or slow that movement down, and, just because one knows this, to control oneself, and (though the hands may itch to be at work) to do nothing, to be content to look on with the tingling and lustful curiosity of the psychologist—that is the only joy which can fire this cold spirit; that alone can quicken the flow of this thin, sluggish, and almost watery blood.

For Joseph Fouché is a sober-minded man, a man without nerves; and only on the psychological plane,

only in this quasi-perverse spiritual passion, does he know the rapture of intoxication. But in such seconds before the decision of great issues, his customary rather sullen seriousness is always transformed into cheerfulness of a kind—a cheerfulness that is cruel and cynical. How can a pleasure which is exclusively mental show itself except as cheerfulness, good-natured or ill-natured as the case may be. Since Fouché is ill-natured, he feels cheerful when others are in the extremity of danger. Like the examining magistrate in Dostoeffsky's *Crime and Punishment*, he jests wittily and diabolically when the culprit is shuddering at the prospect of having to expiate his offences. It is especially at such times that his love of mystifications finds vent, so at the moment of utmost peril he has an ingenious little comedy played—the stage being, as one might say, supported upon powder-barrels. A few days before the one fixed for the coup d'état (of course he knows when it is to be), he gives a supper party. Bonaparte and Réal are among the guests; and, looking round as they sit down to table, they become aware that all the plotters are assembled, that the Minister of Police has got together the whole camarilla of those who are conspiring to bring about the overthrow of the Directory. The guests exchange uneasy glances. Are the police already waiting outside, to arrest the entire group of them at once, and thus nip the affair in the bud? Maybe those among them who are well versed in history recall the sinister banquet given by Peter the Great to the officers of the Strelitzy, the Guards of old-time Muscovy, at which the heads of the invited were

served up to the monarch for dessert. But atrocities of that sort do not come within the scope of Fouché's method; and tonight, when to the astonishment of the conspirators there enters as last-comer (to give a devilishly grim point to the jest) President Gohier, the very man against whom the plot is aimed, they form the audience at an amazing dialogue. The president asks the Minister of Police for the latest news. "Same old news," answers Fouché indifferently, eyes half closed, so that he does not seem to be looking at anyone in particular. "Always the same chatter about conspiracies. I know just how much of it and just how little to believe. Were there anything serious, you would soon see the evidence in the Place de la République."

This delicate allusion to the guillotine sends a cold shiver down the conspirators' backs. They do not know whether their host is making fun of them or of Gohier. Probably even Fouché does not know, and is giving himself up to the only delight he indulges in, the stimulating joy of duplicity; he is luxuriating in the tang of danger that spices the desperate hazard of playing a double game.

After this agreeable little diversion, the Minister of Police—while waiting for the cat to jump—slips back into his strange lethargy, remains blind and deaf, though half the Senate has been bribed, and the army won over. And now a remarkable thing happens, for Joseph Fouché, known to all as an early riser, and invariably the first-comer at his office, oversleeps himself on the

morning of the Eighteenth Brumaire, which happens to be the day fixed for the Napoleonic coup d'état. He would like to sleep the whole day through, but two messengers from the Directory rout him out of his bed, to inform him about the singular proceedings in the Senate, about the summoning of the troops, and about the coup d'état which is already obviously in progress. Joseph Fouché rubs his eyes, and expresses the greatest possible amazement (as in duty bound, although the evening before he had had a long pow-wow with Bonaparte). As things are, of course, he cannot have his sleep out. Being Minister of Police, he must get up, dress, and go to the Directory, where President Gohier gives him a rough reception and does not allow him to continue playing the comedy of surprise.

"It was your duty," says the president, "to inform us that such a conspiracy was being planned, and surely your police could have got wind of it."

Fouché quietly pockets the affront, and asks for instructions, as if he were the most faithful servitor in the world. But Gohier remains unconciliatory. He says that if the Directory has any orders to give, they will be given to perons who enjoy its confidence. Fouché smiles to himself, thinking: "Poor fool! He is still unaware that this Directory of his has long since ceased to be in a position to issue orders; that two of the five are our own men, and that the third has been bought!" Why should he waste time trying to teach fools? He bows frigidly, and withdraws to return to his post.

All the same, he is not quite certain yet where this

post really is, whether he is Police Minister of the old government or of the new one, for that depends on the issue of the struggle. The next twenty-four hours will decide between the Directory and Bonaparte. The first day has gone well for the latter. The Senate, or Council of Ancients, liberally furnished with promises and, better still, with gold, complies with all Bonaparte's wishes, appoints him to command the armed forces in and near Paris, and transfers the sitting of the Lower House, the Council of Five Hundred, to Saint-Cloud, where there are no working-class battalions, where there is no public opinion, no "people"—but only a fine park, which can be hermetically sealed with the aid of a couple of companies of grenadiers. But this does not yet mean that the game is won, for amid the Five Hundred, there are still a dozen or so troublesome fellows who can neither be bribed nor browbeaten. Among these, there may even be one or two ready to defend the Republic with dagger or pistol against pretenders to the throne. It therefore behoves Fouché to keep calm, not to allow himself to be carried away by his sympathies in one direction or by such a trifle as an oath of fealty in the other. He must keep calm, be on his guard, bide his time until matters have taken a definite turn.

So Fouché keeps calm. Hardly has Bonaparte at the head of his cavalry reached Saint-Cloud, hardly have the chief conspirators (Talleyrand, Sieyès, and a couple of dozen more) followed him thither in carriages, than suddenly by order of the Minister of Police, all the exits from Paris are closed. None but Fouché's own emissaries

may enter or leave the town. Of the eight hundred thousand inhabitants of the metropolis, this one resolute man may alone know whether the coup has succeeded or failed. Every half hour a messenger reports to him the progress of the affair, and he still keeps his mind open. Should Bonaparte get the upper hand, obviously this evening Fouché will be his minister and faithful servant; whereas should the adventurer fail to make good, Fouché will remain the faithful servant of the Directory, ready and willing to arrest the "rebels."

The news which came to hand seemed conflicting, for while Fouché was perfectly self-controlled, Bonaparte, though the greater man of the two, was on this occasion a prey to extreme nervousness. The Eighteenth Brumaire, as the outcome of which the Corsican eventually became the master of Europe, was, ironically enough, the day of his life on which, personally, he showed to least advantage. Firm in face of gunfire, Bonaparte lost his head when called upon to win men by oratory; for years accustomed to command, he had forgotten how to woo. He could snatch a flag and ride into battle in front of his grenadiers; he could grind opposing armies to powder. But, iron soldier though he was, he lacked capacity for intimidating a handful of republican lawyers. Again and again has the scene been described, how the invincible general, put out of countenance if not positively frightened by the angry shouts of the deputies, could only stammer a few commonplace and empty phrases, such as "the God of Battles is on my side," making so pitiful an exhibition of himself that his friends thought

best to drag him from the room. Nothing but the bayonets of his soldiers saved the hero of Arcole and Rivoli from shameful defeat by a few noisy parliamentarians. Not until he was back in the saddle, master and dictator, and able to order his soldiers to clear the hall of assembly, did renewed energy stream into him from his sabre-hilt and restore his shattered senses.

By seven in the evening everything was settled, Bonaparte had become Consul, and was for practical purposes the monarch of France. Had the bold adventurer been overcome by force or voted down, Fouché would instantly have plastered the walls of Paris with some such proclamation as the following: "A base conspiracy has been disclosed. . . ." But now, when Bonaparte has proved victorious, Fouché is quick to make the victory his own. It is not through Bonaparte, but through Police Minister Fouché, that Paris learns next day that the Republic has come to an end and that the Napoleonic dictatorship has begun. In his lying account of the matter, he says: "The Minister of Police informs his fellow-citizens that the Council had met at Saint-Cloud to discuss the interests of the Republic, when General Bonaparte, who had appeared before the Council of Five Hundred to disclose the revolutionary machinations, narrowly missed becoming the victim of an assassin's blow. But the genius of the Republic saved the General. All republicans may remain calm . . . for their wishes may now be fulfilled . . . the weak may remain calm, for they have the support of the strong . . . and those only need fear who fostered disorder, tried to confuse

public opinion, and incited to breaches of the peace. All necessary measures have been taken to hold persons of this last category in check."

Once again Fouché has chosen the most fortunate of moments in which to trim his sails to a new wind. So impudently, so brazenly, does he go over to the side of the conqueror, that the true nature of the man begins to be generally understood. A few weeks later there was staged at one of the suburban theatres of Paris a light comedy entitled: *The Weathercock of Saint-Cloud*. Herein his well-advised caution and his simultaneous capacity for taking sharp curves were parodied to the life. The piece was extremely amusing, its meaning was plain to all, and it was received with universal applause. Fouché, being censor, could of course, had he wished to do so, have prevented this public satire of his personality, but happily he had the good sense and the wit to refrain from anything of the kind. Moreover, he was not the man to make any secret of his character. Far from it, he actually paraded his fickleness and incalculability, because they invested him with a peculiar halo. People might mock at him, provided they obeyed him, and provided they feared him.

Bonaparte is victor of the day; Fouché, renegade and turncoat, has been his secret helper; but the victim of the occasion is Barras, the master of the Directory. He is to be given a lesson in the workings of ingratitude, a lesson which has become historical. For these two men, who now combine to depose him from his high estate,

and to dismiss him like a troublesome beggar with a gratuity of a million, were two years ago creatures of his, his thankful and humble servants, whom he had raised out of nothing. Good-natured, light-hearted, a kindly man, fond of his own pleasures and always willing to let others share them, taking a fancy to the little artillery officer Napoleon Bonaparte, the olive-faced young fellow who was almost ostracized, Barras had literally lifted him out of the streets, and had made a general of a soldier whose military overcoat was darned and still unpaid for. Promoting him over the heads of numberless seniors to be commandant of Paris and handing over to him his own mistress, he had filled his protégé's pockets with money and insisted upon appointing him to the supreme command of the army of Italy, thus building for Bonaparte the bridge to immortality. Fouché, Barras had rescued from the garret in the fifth story, had saved his neck from the guillotine, had saved him from starvation at a time when all were turning him the cold shoulder, and had at length given him too an influential position and had put him in the way of making money. Yet within so short a time, these two men who owed him everything dragged him down into the mud out of which he had lifted them. Assuredly history, which is not precisely a collection of moral tales, has no grosser instance of ingratitude to offer than Napoleon's and Fouché's conduct towards Barras on and immediately after the Eighteenth Brumaire.

But Napoleon's ingratitude towards his protector has at least the justification of genius. The man's overwhelm-

ing strength gives him peculiar rights, for the path of genius, leading upwards towards the stars, must necessarily lead over the heads of men, and, in pursuit of its high endeavour to satisfy the inscrutable purposes of history, can ignore the petty claims of these ephemera. Fouché's ingratitude, on the other hand, is of a kind much more frequently encountered, being the ingratitude of the perfect amoralist, of one whose only interest is, quite frankly, in himself and his own advantage. Fouché, whenever he likes, can forget all his past with amazing and uncanny speed, and we shall find him in his subsequent career giving ever more astonishing proofs of his peculiar mastery in this field. A fortnight later he sends to Barras (the man who had saved him from the "dry guillotine" and from banishment) a formal dismissal into exile, but allows the fallen ruler to take away all his papers—among them, presumably, Fouché's own begging letters and reports of work done as a spy.

Barras, in his mortification, can only clench his teeth. Today, when we read his memoirs, we hear him grind them whenever the names of Bonaparte and Fouché are mentioned. He has but one consolation, namely that Bonaparte is taking Fouché to himself. He is prophetically aware that one of these men will revenge him on the other. They will not remain friends for long.

At first, indeed, during the opening months of their collaboration, the Citizen Minister of Police shows himself to be the most devoted of the servants of the Citizen Consul. Be it noted that on official documents, the high

dignitaries of State are still described as Citizen So-and-So. Bonaparte's ambition is satisfied for the present by the style of first citizen of a Republic. Faced with an overwhelming task, or at any rate with a task which would be overwhelming to anyone else, during these years he displays all the abundance and all the versatility of his youthful genius. Never is Bonaparte's figure more imposing, never does he show himself more creative and more broadly human, than in this epoch of reconstruction. To embody the revolution in institutions, to preserve its achievements and at the same time to mitigate its excesses, to end the war by a victory and to give this victory a substantial meaning by a vigorous and honourable peace—towards these sublime ideals does the new master of the French Republic now guide his footsteps, taking the long views characteristic of his penetrating insight, and showing the tenacious energy of an indefatigable worker. When we think of Napoleon Bonaparte's labours of Hercules, we should not think of those years which loom so largely in the Napoleonic legend when his main achievements were battles and conquests, we should not think of Austerlitz, Eylau, and Valladolid, but of the years in which a France distracted by faction was remade by him into a vigorous State, in which the worthless assignats were replaced by a stable currency, and in which the Code Napoléon provided laws and customs with fixed and yet acceptable forms. Thus did his statesmanlike genius work with equal success in all directions, restoring health to the French administration and bringing peace to Europe. These years, and not

the years of military aggrandizement, were those in which he showed his true greatness; and never did his ministers co-operate with him more straightforwardly, more energetically, and more loyally than during this epoch. Fouché, too, at his time rendered him perfect service, the two men being at one in the conviction that civil strife could better be brought to a close by negotiation and concession than by force and bloodshed. Within a few months, Fouché had restored tranquillity to the country, clearing out the last haunts both of the terrorists and of the royalists, keeping the roads free from footpads, and subordinating all the manifestations of his own comparatively petty bureaucratic energy to the far-reaching plans of Bonaparte. Thus did splendid and useful undertakings bind the two men together; the servant had found his master, and the master had found a most valuable servant.

The time when Bonaparte first began to mistrust Fouché can, strangely enough, be fixed to the very day, even to the very hour, although from most historians this seemingly small event has remained hidden amid the heaped-up incidents of those over-crowded years. Only Balzac, a man with the keen vision of an eagle and the insight of a trained psychologist, a man accustomed to detect the essential amid the inconspicuous and to recognize the enduring influence of many a "petit détail," has disinterred it (though he hastens to dress it up somewhat for his purposes as a novelist). The little scene takes place during the Italian campaign, which is to decide

NAPOLEON AS CONSUL

FROM A PAINTING BY ADOLPHE YVON

between Austria and France. On January 20, 1800, the ministers of State and other notables are holding council in Paris, and are in a mood of remarkable unanimity. A bearer of evil tidings has just arrived from the battlefield of Marengo. He reports that Bonaparte has had a disastrous defeat, and that the French army is in full flight. Every member of the council entertains the same secret thought, that it will be impossible for a defeated general to remain First Consul, and each of them ponders who is the most likely successor. We do not know to what extent such speculations found voice, but there is no question that quiet preparations were made for the eventuality of Bonaparte's downfall, and that the latter's brothers were aware of what was going on. Carnot was certainly the most venturesome, for he desired the prompt re-establishment of the old Committee of General Security. As for Fouché, we may well suppose that, in conformity with his character, instead of loyally advocating the cause of the supposedly defeated Consul, he must have preserved a cautious silence, so that, in the event of a change of master, he would be on as good terms with the new one as he had been with the old.

Next day, however, another messenger arrives from the front. This time the news is very different. There has been a brilliant victory at Marengo. At the eleventh hour, General Desaix, with the intuition of military genius, came to the help of Bonaparte, and converted a defeat into a triumph. Shortly after, then, when the First Consul returns, his position is a hundred times stronger than it was when he set out. Of course he learns that at

the first news of a reverse his ministers and confidants were ready to throw him overboard. He avenges himself on Carnot, the chief offender, who is dismissed. The others, including Fouché, retain their posts. Since Fouché has displayed his usual caution, there is no proof that he has been disloyal; but there is no proof that he has been loyal either! He has not compromised himself irrevocably, but he has not given signal witness of his fidelity. Once more he has shown himself to be a trustworthy ally in good fortune, and an untrustworthy one in bad. Bonaparte does not cashier him, does not blame him, does not punish him. But from this day onward, he ceases to trust him.

This little and almost forgotten episode has psychological effects as well as concrete ones. It gives a plain intimation that a government upheld only by the sword and by victories is likely to be overthrown by the first defeat, and that every ruler whose position is not legitimized by blood and ancestry must hasten to found, since he cannot inherit, a dynasty. Bonaparte, effervescing with the conviction of his own powers, and animated with that invincible optimism proper to men of genius in the ascending phase, might well have overlooked so gentle a warning. Not so his brothers. We must never forget, though historians often seem to forget it in their explanations of the happenings in Napoleon's career, that he did not come to France alone, but as centre of a clan lusting for wealth and power. In early days his mother and his four impecunious brothers would have been satis-

fied if their pacemaker, their Napolione, had married the daughter of a rich manufacturer, so that out of the lady's dowry he could occasionally have given his sisters a dress or two. But now that he has climbed to such unexpected heights, they throng round him, hoping that he will lift the whole family with him. They, too, want to scale the heights, want to make, first France, and later all the world, a Bonaparte family affair. Unscrupulous, insatiable in their appetites, freebooters unadorned and unexcused by any touch of genius, they are perpetually urging their brother to make himself independent of popular favour by setting up a permanent, a hereditary monarchy. They clamour for dominions of their own, while he is to become king or emperor. They want him to divorce Josephine that he may marry a Badenese princess —for no one as yet ventures to think of his marrying the sister of the Tsar, or a daughter of the House of Habsburg! By their perpetual intrigues, they drive him farther and farther away from his old companions, from his old ideas, from the Republic towards reaction, from liberty towards despotism.

Josephine, the Consul's wife, stands alone and defenceless in face of the hungry and unsympathetic Bonaparte clan. She knows that every upward step which Bonaparte takes towards becoming an autocrat removes him farther from her side. For she is not in a position to provide what a king or an emperor needs most of all, and that which the dynastic idea pre-eminently demands from a woman who shares a throne—an heir, whose existence can alone consolidate a dynasty. Very few of

Bonaparte's advisers are on her side, for she is always in debt, and therefore has no money to make them complaisant. At this time, the most faithful of her allies is Fouché. He has long been watching uneasily how unexpected successes have magnified Bonaparte's ambition to an incredible degree; how persistently his master desires that every upright republican shall be persecuted as an anarchist and a terrorist. His sharp and suspicious eyes enable him to see what Victor Hugo has described in the phrase: "Déjà Napoléon perçait sous Bonaparte" —that the personality of the emperor was peeping through that of the general, that (to the world's peril) the citizen was becoming in his own estimation a Cæsar. This is dangerous for Fouché, whose vote in favour of the execution of King Louis has for good or ill chained him to the Republic, so that his whole interest is bound up in the maintenance of a republican form of government. That is why he is afraid of the prevailing monarchical trend; and that is why, both secretly and openly, he espouses the cause of Josephine.

Such conduct is more than the Bonaparte clan can forgive. With Corsican hate they watch his every action, dogging the footsteps of this man who is spoiling their game, so that, at the first stumble, they can lay him low.

They wait long and impatiently. At length something happens which gives them a chance against Fouché. On December 24, 1800, Bonaparte drives to the Opera, to hear the first Paris performance of Haydn's *Creation*. As the carriage is passing through the narrow Rue Nicaise,

there explodes just behind it an infernal machine which throws fragments high above the house-tops. Nothing but the speed at which the coachman, presumably drunk, is driving saves the First Consul. Forty persons lie shattered and bleeding in the street, and the carriage rocks in the blast of the explosion. Pale as marble, Bonaparte continues his drive to the Opera, determined to show his nerve to an enthusiastic public. He retains an equable if somewhat rigid expression throughout the performance, while Josephine, sitting beside him, in the throes of a nervous crisis, cannot conceal her tears. With a creditable calm, the First Consul is able to return thanks for the acclamations that greet his escape.

When he returns to the Tuileries, his ministers and advisers soon learn that his equanimity at the Opera had only been assumed. He rages at them, and especially at Fouché, who is pale, but remains unmoved. The Minister of Police, says Bonaparte, ought to have been on the track of such a conspiracy long before, but he is hand in glove with his fellow-culprits, the Jacobins, and shows towards them a criminal indulgence. Fouché quietly replies that it is not yet proved that the attempt on the Consul's life was made by Jacobins, and that he himself believes royalist conspirators and English money to have been at work. His impassivity and contradiction enrage the First Consul yet more: "I tell you it was the Jacobins, the terrorists, those rascals who are in permanent rebellion, who form a compact body opposed to all the governments. They are the sort of wretches who, to murder me, would think nothing of slaughtering thousands

of victims. But I shall deal with them in a way which will be conspicuous from afar." Fouché is bold enough to express his doubts a second time. Thereupon the hot-blooded Corsican is on the verge of making a personal assault upon his minister, so that Josephine has to interfere, and to touch her husband appeasingly on the arm. But in the matter of words, at least, Bonaparte is not to be restrained; and, declaiming against Fouché, he bursts out with a catalogue of all the murders and other crimes of the Jacobins: the December massacres in Paris, the "republican weddings" in Nantes, the shooting down of the prisoners at Versailles—this last being a plain hint to the mitrailleur of Lyons that his own past has not been forgotten. But the more furiously Bonaparte shouts at him, the more obstinately does Fouché maintain silence. Not a muscle twitches in the iron mask of his face, while all these fierce words are being volleyed at him, and while Napoleon's brothers and the courtiers look scornfully at the Minister of Police, who has at length exposed himself to attack. He presents an icy front against the storm of suspicions, and with a mien of chill reserve he quits the Tuileries.

His fall appears inevitable, for Napoleon will not heed a word of Josephine's in his favour. "Has he not been one of their leaders? Don't I know what he did at Lyons and on the Loire? Well, it is the Loire and Lyons which explain Fouché's conduct to me." Such are his bitter exclamations. People are already beginning to exchange speculations concerning the name of the new Minister of Police; Joseph Fouché is already cold-shouldered at

Court, and it seems (as so often) as if his race were run.

Nor does his position improve during the next few days. Bonaparte holds fast to the opinion that the attempt on his life was the work of the Jacobins. He demands severe measures, exemplary punishments. Fouché, who declares that he is following a very different trail, is treated with contumely and regarded with suspicion. The fools laugh at the stupid Minister of Police, who cannot unravel so simple an affair. His enemies triumph because he so stubbornly persists in his mistake. Fouché says not a word. He does not argue, but is silent. He is silent throughout this fortnight. He is silent and obeys without protest when he is ordered to arrest one hundred and thirty radicals and ex-Jacobins who are to be sent to Guiana, to the "dry guillotine." Without a qualm, he hastens the execution of the last men of the Mountain, of the disciples of his friend Babeuf, Topino and Arena whose only crime has been that of saying in public that in Italy Bonaparte stole a couple of millions, in order to use them for the purchase of an autocrat's position. He looks on inertly when, in defiance of his own convictions, some are transported and others executed. He is as silent as a priest who, bound by the secret of the confessional, watches with sealed lips the condemnation of an innocent man. Fouché is content to follow a different trail. While the others are mocking at him, and while Bonaparte day after day ironically chides him for his foolish obstinacy, within the recesses of his office he is collecting irrefutable proofs that the attempt on the

First Consul's life was actually the work of the Chouans, of the royalist party. Whilst in the Council of State and in the anteroom of the Tuileries he presents an impassive front to all attacks, he is in secret feverishly at work with the best of his agents. Vast sums of money are offered as reward, all the police spies of France are set in motion, and the whole city is ransacked for evidence. The infernal machine had been drawn by a mare, and though the poor beast had been blown into a hundred fragments, its previous owner has been discovered. This man has given a description of the persons to whom he had sold it. Thus, thanks to the elaborate "Biographie Chouannique," a lexicon kept by Fouché containing detailed personal descriptions of all émigrés and royalists, of all the "Chouans," the names of the conspirators have been discovered. But still Fouché maintains silence. Still he allows his enemies to triumph over him. He is weaving the last thread of an unbreakable net. A few days more, and he will catch those of whom he is in pursuit. Only a few days more! For Fouché, whose ambition has been piqued, whose pride has been humbled, will not be satisfied with any minor victory over Bonaparte and those who accuse him of having been ill informed. He too wants to win a Marengo; he too desires to secure an unqualified, a crushing triumph.

Then, after a fortnight, he strikes. The plot is fully disclosed. All the trails have been followed up. Just as Fouché had prophesied, Cadoudal, the most dreaded of the Chouans, is shown to have been the leader of the

conspiracy, and declared royalists, bought by British gold, to have been his confederates. The news assails Fouché's enemies like a thunderclap. They realize that one hundred and thirty persons have been fruitlessly and unjustly condemned, and that they have been premature in making mock of this inscrutable Fouché. The infallible Minister of Police stands out before the public stronger, more respected, and more dreaded than ever. With mingled wrath and admiration, Bonaparte contemplates the iron calculator, whose cold-blooded reckoning has once again brought him to the right conclusion. Against his own will, the First Consul has to admit: "Fouché is right. His judgment has proved sounder than that of others. We must keep an eye on the returned émigrés, on the Chouans, and on all the members of this party." But the affair wins for Fouché no more than Bonaparte's respect, not his love. Autocrats never thank a man who has shown them to have been mistaken or unjust. Immortal in its wisdom is the story told by Plutarch of the soldier who saved the king's life in battle, and instead of taking to flight promptly (as a sage advised him) relied on the monarch's gratitude—to lose his head thereby. Monarchs do not love those who have seen them in a moment of weakness; and a man of despotic temperament dislikes a counsellor who has proved wiser than himself, even though on one occasion only.

In the narrow field of police activities Fouché has now won the greatest possible triumph. But how small is that triumph in comparison with those of Bonaparte during

the last two years of the Consulate! The dictator has crowned a series of victories by the most splendid victories of all, by the peace with England and the Concordat with the Church. Thanks to his vigour, thanks to the pre-eminent ability and the creative scope of his plans, the two leading powers in the world are no longer enemies of France. The country has been tranquillized, the finances have been set in order, the factions have ceased to rage, and general harmony is rife. The national wealth is increasing once again; the industries of France are taking on a new impetus; the arts are flourishing; an Augustan age has dawned, and the hour is approaching when this modern Augustus will be able to style himself Cæsar. Fouché, who can read every thought of Bonaparte's, knows whither the Corsican's ambition is tending. He sees plainly enough that his master can no longer be satisfied with holding the highest office in a republic, but is determined to make the country he has saved a realm of his very own, one which he will be able to hand down as a heritage to his family for all time. So far, indeed, as public utterances are concerned, the Consul of the Republic does not give vent to these unrepublican aspirations; but in private he lets his confidants see his wish that the Senate shall manifest its gratitude to himself by some "témoignage éclatant"—some striking demonstration. In his innermost heart, he hopes for a Mark Antony, a trusty servant, who will propose that he shall be given an imperial crown, and Fouché, subtle and cunning, might in this way ensure for himself Bonaparte's lasting gratitude.

But Fouché declines the rôle. Not openly, of course; but while appearing to comply with Bonaparte's plans, from the background he tries to hinder their realization. He is opposed to the Bonaparte brothers, to the Bonaparte clan, and is on the side of Josephine, who trembles at the thought of her husband becoming a monarch, for she knows full well that in that case she will not long remain his wife. Fouché warns her against open resistance. "Keep quiet," he says. "It will be futile for you to withstand your husband's wishes. Your apprehensions bore him, and my counsels would only put him out of humour." Fouché, therefore, true to his nature, prefers to work underground in the hope of frustrating his master's ambitious designs; and when Bonaparte, with assumed modesty, still refrains from using plain terms, and when the Senate nevertheless shows itself inclined to give a "témoignage éclatant," Fouché is one of those who succeeds in persuading the senators that the great man, being a loyal republican, wants nothing more than the position of First Consul for another ten years. The senators, convinced that they can thus honour and please Bonaparte, pass a formal resolution to this effect. But Bonaparte, seeing through the intrigue, and knowing perfectly well who has been pulling the strings, foams with rage on receipt of the undesired and beggarly gift. For one who already in imagination is wearing an imperial crown, the Consulship for ten paltry years is a mere empty nutshell, which he will contemptuously stamp into powder beneath his feet.

At length, therefore, Bonaparte lays aside the mask

of modesty, and expresses his wishes in so many words. He wants to be Consul for Life! Beneath the thin veil of this phrase, every shrewd observer can plainly discern the coming crown. But so strong, by this time, is the new ruler's position, that, when the matter is submitted to a popular vote, by a majority of several millions the Consulate for Life is enthusiastically voted. The Republic is at an end, and the new Monarchy has begun.

The clique of Bonaparte's brothers and sisters, the Corsican family clan, will never forgive Joseph Fouché for having thrown caltrops in the way of the pretender galloping towards his crown. Now, therefore, when Bonaparte, by the grant of the Consulate for Life, is already firmly seated in the saddle, they urge upon him the dismissal of this inconvenient man who had held the stirrup for a time. Of what profit is it now, after so magnificent a popular vote, when all internal oppositions are at an end, to retain the services of the over-zealous watchman—who watches their own obscure intrigues as well as the country at large? Away with him, then! Down with the persistent intriguer, with the man who is perpetually making difficulties! Incessantly, impatiently, with never-ending reiteration, they advise the still hesitant Bonaparte to this effect.

On the whole, the Consul for Life is of the same opinion. He, too, is harassed by the continued presence of the man who knows too much and is always trying to know more; by this grey shadow creeping along in attendance upon his own resplendent figure. But a pretext

will be needed for the dismissal of the minister who has done such excellent service, and is universally respected. Besides, the two of them have grown strong together, and the subordinate is so powerful that the master will do ill to make of him an open adversary. He is acquainted with every secret, has achieved a sinister insight into the not over-clean private affairs of the Corsican clan, so that it will be better to avoid giving him gross offence. A shrewd way out of the difficulty is found, one which will spare the minister's personal susceptibilities. Before the world, the dismissal is not to be deemed a mark of disfavour. Fouché is told that as Minister of Police he has done his work in so masterly a fashion that his office of keeping watch on all the citizens has become superfluous. The minister is not dismissed, but the Ministry of Police is abolished, and thus Bonaparte can rid himself of Fouché without injury to the latter's pride.

Furthermore, the bitter pill is sedulously gilded. He is compensated for the loss of his position by a seat in the Senate; and in a letter wherein Bonaparte announces this rise in rank, we read: "Citizen Fouché, Minister of Police in difficult circumstances, has, by his talents and by his activity, by his devotion to the government, shown himself fully equal to all that circumstances have demanded of him. Now that he will be a member of the Senate, if other circumstances should again make it necessary to establish a Ministry of Police, the government will not find anyone more worthy of its confidence than he." In addition, Bonaparte, who has not failed to notice how completely the sometime communist has become

reconciled to his old enemy, money, builds a golden bridge on the road towards retirement. When the minister, liquidating the accounts of his office, hands over a sum of two million four hundred thousand francs as credit balance, Bonaparte bestows upon him a cool half, that is to say twelve hundred thousand francs. In addition, the man who used to despise money, the man who only ten years before had fulminated against the "vile and corrupting metal," receives, over and above his seat in the Senate, the senatorship of Aix, a minor principality extending from Marseilles to Toulon, whose value is estimated at ten millions of francs. Bonaparte knows his man; knows that Fouché has an itching palm; knows that gold is the best way of securing his allegiance. Seldom, therefore, in the course of history has a minister been dismissed with more honourable and more lucrative tokens of respect than Joseph Fouché.

CHAPTER FIVE

MINISTER OF THE EMPEROR

1804 – 1811

In 1802, therefore, Joseph Fouché (or, rather, Son Excellence Monsieur le Sénateur Joseph Fouché), complying with the First Consul's gently emphatic wish, retires into the private life whence he had emerged ten years before. An almost incredible decade it has been, perilous and murderous, weighty with destiny, and bringing extensive changes in its train; but Joseph Fouché has known how to turn such troublous times to account. Now, when retirement is thrust upon him, he has not, as in 1794, to seek asylum in a cold and narrow garret, but buys a well-equipped house in the Rue Cerutti, which may presumably have belonged in former days to one of the "vile aristocrats" or "infamous rich." At Ferrières, in time to come to be the home of the Rothschilds, he has a charmingly furnished country seat, and his domain in Provence, the senatorship of Aix, supplies him with ample funds. In other directions, too, he shows himself an accomplished alchemist, or to be possessed of King Midas's golden touch. His protégés on the stock exchange admit him to participation in their affairs, and he buys land to good advantage. Within a few years the writer of the first communist manifesto will be one of the

richest of all the citizens of France and the greatest landowner in the country. The man who was the tiger of Lyons is no longer a ravening beast of prey, but a demure and well-behaved creature, a thrifty capitalist, and a master in the art of painlessly and unobtrusively extracting surplus value. Yet with his fortune of fifteen millions, Joseph Fouché lives much as he did in the garret when, with infinite labour and pains, he was able to get together fifteen sous a day. He does not smoke, does not drink, does not gamble; he squanders no money on loose women or on the vanities of life. With his wife and children (three more have come to replace those who succumbed in the years of privation), he passes his days as a homely squire: goes for walks on his estate; gives an unpretentious entertainment now and again; listens attentively while friends play on his wife's pianoforte; reads improving books and enjoys the pleasure of conversation—what time deep down, far below the fair surface displayed by the respectable bourgeois, there continues to smoulder his elemental lust for the hazards of political life, for the tensions of the game that is being played in the great world. His neighbours see nothing of this; they see only the sober and thrifty country gentleman, the good father, the kind husband. No one who had not known him in public life could ever have guessed that behind the mask of cheerful taciturnity there lurked an increasingly fervent passion to resume a leading part.

Power is like the Medusa's head. Whoever has looked on her countenance, can no longer turn his face away, but remains for always under her spell. Whoever has

once enjoyed the intoxication of holding sway over his fellows, can never thenceforward renounce it altogether. Flutter the pages of history in search for examples of the voluntary renouncement of power. You will find among thousands upon thousands of rulers, barely a dozen who, merely from satiety and while still in the full possession of their senses, have forgone the almost sacrilegious pleasure of playing providence for millions. (Sulla and Charles V are the most famous among the exceptions.) As little as a gamester can abstain from the gaming-table, the drunkard from drink, the hunter from the chase, can Joseph Fouché abstain from political intrigue. Rest is a torment to him; and although with a cheerful visage, with well-simulated indifference, he can play the part of Cincinnatus returned to the plough, in reality his nerves are throbbing and his fingers twitching with eagerness to hold the political cards once more. Although he no longer wears official harness, he remains in the police service as a volunteer, and, lest his pen should forget its cunning, week by week he sends the First Consul secret information. This provides him with amusement and occupation, but cannot really satisfy his craving, so that his pose of spectator is nothing more than a febrile waiting until he can get the reins into his hands once more, and feel that he is exerting power over his fellows, power over the world's destinies, power for its own sake!

Bonaparte is not unaware of the signs of Fouché's impatience, but he prefers to ignore them. The man is so damnably clever, so damnably industrious, and must be

kept away from the centre of things, must be kept in the dark as long as possible. Once people have come to recognize the overwhelming energy of will that activates Fouché's underground activities, they are disinclined to take him into their service unless they are very urgently and very dangerously in need of his help. The Consul shows him favour in various ways, employs him on all sorts of minor jobs, thanks him for the information he sends along, invites him from time to time to attend the Privy Council, and above all (to keep him quiet) gives him abundant opportunities for amassing wealth. But there is one thing which Bonaparte obstinately refrains from doing as long as he can, and that is from reviving the Ministry of Police and reinstating Fouché in the old post. While the dictator's position is still strong, and so long as he does not make any mistakes, he has no need for so formidable and so perilously clever a servant.

Luckily for Fouché, however, Bonaparte does make mistakes. Above all he makes the mistake which proves historically unpardonable of being no longer satisfied to be Bonaparte. He makes the greatest of his blunders in that, over and above his justified self-confidence, in addition to the triumph of his uniqueness, he covets the pale sheen of legitimacy, the vain splendours of an imperial title. The man whose natural gifts, the man whose unexampled and overwhelmingly forcible personality, might have relieved him of the need for being afraid of anyone or anything, trembles before the shadow of the past, before the impotent nimbus of the expelled Bourbons. Thus it is that he allows himself to be misled

by Talleyrand into a breach of international law, when he has the Duke of Enghien kidnapped by French gendarmes on neutral territory, brought to Paris, and shot —a deed for the characterization of which Fouché coined the famous phrase: "It was worse than a crime, it was a blunder." By this execution, Bonaparte creates around himself an airless space filled only with fear and horror and hatred. That is why it will soon seem to him desirable to put himself once more under the protection of the hundred-eyed Argus, under the protection of the police.

Besides, and this is even more instrumental in promoting the recall of Fouché, in the year 1804 Consul Bonaparte needs a shrewd and unscrupulous helper upon the last stage of his ascent. Once again he needs a man to hold his stirrup. That which two years ago seemed to him the supreme fulfilment of his ambition, the Consulate for Life, now proves insufficient. He is no longer content with being the first citizen among citizens, but wants to be lord over subjects. Nothing but the golden imperial crown can cool his fevered brow. He who would become Cæsar, needs an Antony; and Fouché, although for a long time he played the rôle of Brutus (in earlier days even that of Catiline), shows himself, now that he is made hungry by two years' political fasting, perfectly willing to inveigle the imperial crown out of the Senate. Money and promises serve as lures, and thus the world is able to enjoy the remarkable spectacle of the sometime president of the Jacobin Club busily canvassing in the lobbies of the Senate, pulling this string

and that in turn, until at length a pair of complaisant Byzantines propose and second a motion to the effect that there shall be established "institutions which will destroy the hopes of the conspirators by ensuring the existence of the government beyond that of the life of its present chief." Translating this verbiage into plain words, the meaning is that Consul-for-Life Bonaparte is to become Hereditary-Emperor Napoleon. Fouché, who can dip his pen into oil as readily as he used to dip it into blood, is presumably the author of that currishly subservient petition from the Senate asking Bonaparte "to complete his work by making it immortal." Few used their spades more doughtily in digging the tomb of the Republic than did Joseph Fouché of Nantes, ex-deputy of the Convention, ex-president of the Jacobin Club, le mitrailleur de Lyon, the destroyer of tyrants, and in former days the most republican of republicans.

He gets his reward. Just as a few years earlier Citizen Fouché by Citizen Consul Bonaparte, so now, in 1804, after two years of golden exile, Son Excellence Monsieur le Sénateur Fouché is appointed minister by Sa Majesté l'Empereur Napoléon. For the fifth time Joseph Fouché takes an oath of fealty: the first had been to a government that was still monarchical; the second, to the Republic; the third, to the Directory; the fourth, tc the Consulate. When he takes the fifth, to the Empire, he is but five-and-forty years of age. There is plenty of time left for new oaths, new loyalties and disloyalties! With energies recuperated by his long rest, he flings himself once more into the old and beloved environ-

ment of stormy wind and water, sworn servant of the new-made Emperor, but in truth faithful to nothing but his own restless craving.

For ten years thereafter we see them standing on the stage of history, facing one another, these two figures, Napoleon and Fouché, their destinies intertwined notwithstanding their mutual clairvoyant resistance. Napoleon has no liking for Fouché, nor Fouché any for Napoleon. Filled with secret antipathy, each of them makes use of the other, and they are bound together solely by the attraction between hostile poles. Fouché knows the elemental strength, the titanic and dangerous force of Napoleon; he knows that for many, many years the world may not again bring to life a man of such transcendent genius, and a man so fitted to serve his turn. Napoleon, on his side, knows that no one else understands him so perfectly and so quickly as does Fouché, the dispassionate and all-seeing spy, the man with unwearied industry, the man whose political talent can be applied with equal versatility and equal success to the best and to the basest uses, the man who lacks only one quality of the perfect servant—unconditional loyalty.

For, in truth, Fouché will never become anyone's servant, and still less anyone's lackey. He never sacrifices his intellectual independence, never wholly surrenders his own will in pursuit of another's ends. Far from it, the more the other ex-republicans, decked out as new nobles, are dazzled by the glories of the Imperator, and the more they degenerate from counsellors into

flatterers and lickspittles, the stiffer becomes Fouché's back. True, it is no longer possible to face the authoritarian Emperor, who grows ever more Cæsarean, with open contradiction, with blunt divergence of opinion, for in the palace of the Tuileries frank comradeship and free exchange of views between citizen and citizen have long since been done away with. Emperor Napoleon has now to be addressed by his old comrades-in-arms and even by his brothers (how they must have smiled!) exclusively as "Sire." No one but his wife may use the familiar "thou" in speaking to him. As an outcome of the same megalomania, we find that he will no longer allow his ministers to advise him. Citizen Minister Fouché, when he came to see Citizen Consul Bonaparte, could wear comfortable bourgeois attire and could walk without ceremony. But when Minister Joseph Fouché now seeks audience of Emperor Napoleon, he must have his neck cramped in a high and stiff gold-embroidered collar, must be swathed in the imposing court-uniform with black silk stockings and pumps, must be plastered with orders, and must walk ceremoniously, hat in hand. "Monsieur" Fouché must respectfully bow to those who used to be his fellow-conspirators and comrades, before he is permitted to address Napoleon as "Your Majesty." He must present himself with an obeisance, and must take leave with another obeisance; and without a word, without any attempt at intimate conversation, he must accept Napoleon's brusquely given commands. There must be no opposition to the opinions of the most self-willed of all self-willed men.

At least, there must be no open opposition. Fouché knows Napoleon too well to force a contrary opinion upon his chief's notice. He allows himself to be given orders, like all the other flatterers and servile ministers of the imperial epoch; but there is this little difference between himself and those others, that he does not always do what he is told. If he is instructed to make certain arrests of which he does not approve, he gives timely warning; or if he has no choice but to punish, he lets every one know that he does so on the Emperor's express order, and not of his own wish. But when any act of clemency or grace comes through him, he represents it as being done on his own initiative. The more masterful Napoleon becomes (and it is interesting to note how this man's temperament, dictatorial from the first, becomes ever more and more autocratic through the exercise of power), the more amiable, the more conciliatory, is the demeanour of Fouché. Hence, without saying a word against the Emperor, and only by hints, smiles, and an expressive silence, he is able, unaided, to form a visible and yet never palpable opposition to the new regime by God's grace. He never takes the dangerous course of uttering unwelcome truths to His Majesty. He knows full well that kings and queens, even if at one time they were called Bonaparte, have no use for unwelcome truths. But he often succeeds in smuggling such truths into his daily reports. Instead of saying "I think," or "I believe," and thus exposing himself to a reprimand for daring to think and believe on his own account, he writes in his report "It is said," or "There is common

talk to the effect," or "One of the ambassadors has declared." Thus the pâté de foie gras of piquant novelties he serves up day by day almost always contains a few peppercorns about the imperial family. Biting his lips, Napoleon has to read all the current scandal about his sisters, presented in the form of "ill-natured rumours," together with caustic comments on his own sayings and doings, acrid observations with which Fouché's adroit hand has deliberately interspersed the bulletins. In this way, without committing himself to anything, the queer servant is able from time to time to serve up to his cross-grained master unpalatable verities, and, looking on politely and non-committally while Napoleon is reading, he can watch how unpleasant is the taste of the dish. Fouché has his own way of avenging himself on Lieutenant Bonaparte, who, since assuming the imperial mantle, has decreed that his former advisers are to approach him tremulously and with bent backs.

We see that the two men's feelings towards one another are by no means friendly. Even as Fouché is an unpleasant kind of servant for Napoleon, so is Napoleon an unpleasant kind of master for Fouché. The Emperor never accepts one of the minister's reports frankly and uncritically. He scans every line in search of the most trifling discrepancies, the most insignificant signs of neglect; and, having found them, he gives vent to the native impetuosity of his unrestrained Corsican temperament, and storms at Fouché like an angry headmaster "rowing" a schoolboy. Furthermore, colleagues,

doorkeepers, and eavesdroppers are all agreed in declaring that the phlegm with which Fouché endured these ill-mannered reprimands served only to inflame Napoleon's wrath. But apart from the testimony of witnesses (for all the memoirs of the period must be taken with a grain of salt and must be read between the lines), we could infer the state of affairs from a study of other documents. We hear the autocrat's drill-sergeant tone echoing through his letters. "I find that the police are not keeping a sufficiently careful eye upon the press"; he writes to the man who is a past master in that very sort of work; or, "One might think that not a soul in the Ministry of Police has ever learned to read"; or, again, "Let me impress upon you the need for minding your own business, and not meddling in foreign affairs." Nor does the Emperor hesitate to give his minister a fierce dressing-down in the presence of onlookers, such as aides-de-camp or members of the Council of State; and at these times, when his anger seems to overleap all bounds, he will speak openly of Fouché's terrorist past, will talk of what happened in Lyons, and will interlard the abuse with mouthings at the "regicide" and "traitor." But Fouché, the frigid observer, who after ten years knows every note in his master's keyboard, is well aware that the outbursts of fury, while at times they are perfectly genuine (being then the expression of a hot-blooded man's utter lack of control), are at other times simulated, and no more than clever play-acting. He therefore remains equally unmoved by the genuine anger and by the spurious; he is neither perturbed nor

humbugged; and he is not intimidated, as is, for instance, the Austrian minister Count Cobenzl, who shakes in his shoes when Napoleon seizes a costly vase and dashes it to pieces on the floor. Pale and impassive as ever, his face set like a mask, and without a sign of nervousness, Fouché holds his ground beneath this douche of savage words—though we may well suppose that as soon as he is outside the door, and when his master can no longer see his face, he indulges in the luxury of a sarcastic or malicious smile. When for the hundredth time he is threatened with dismissal or banishment, he quietly takes his leave, confident that next day the Emperor will send for him as usual. And always his confidence is justified by the result. For a whole decade Napoleon—his distrust, his anger, and his secret detestation notwithstanding—finds it impossible to dispense with the services of Joseph Fouché.

Though the servant's power over the master was an enigma to all their contemporaries, there was nothing magical or hypnotic about it. It was acquired deliberately, by diligence, shrewdness, and systematic observation. Fouché knew a great deal; he knew too much. Partly owing to the Emperor's communicativeness, and partly against his master's will, he had become acquainted with all the imperial secrets, so that, thanks to the marvellous extent of his information, the land and its ruler were to a considerable degree under his thumb. From Josephine he had learned every detail of Napoleon's domestic life, and from Barras all the incidents of the great adventurer's rise; thanks to his own close relations with

the financiers, he was intimately acquainted with the condition of the Emperor's private exchequer; and he was aware of the hundred and one sordid doings of the other Bonapartes, such as the brothers' gambling and the behaviour of Pauline as a modern Messalina. Nor were Napoleon's extra-conjugal amours hidden from him. When the Emperor, cloaked and muffled, slipped out of a side-door in the Tuileries at an hour before midnight on his way to an assignation, Fouché knew next morning to whose house the carriage had driven, how long it had been kept waiting outside, the precise moment of the return—and was even able on one occasion to shame the ruler of the world with a report which showed that the chosen fair had betrayed Napoleon by giving herself to the embraces of a far less distinguished Thespian. Since one of the Emperor's secretaries is in his pay, Fouché receives a copy of every one of his chief's more important dispatches; and many of the court lackeys (the uniformed as well as the liveried) draw monthly bonuses from the secret funds of the Minister of Police in return for trustworthy reports concerning all that is said and done in the palace. By day and by night, in bed and at board, Napoleon is watched by this over-zealous servant. Since no secret can be hidden from him, the Emperor must confide in him willy-nilly. It is his all-embracing knowledge of private concerns, this and nothing more, which gives Fouché the power over his fellows that seems so wonderful to Balzac.

But Fouché, who thus keeps himself fully informed about the Emperor's doings and plans, words and

thoughts, is no less careful to keep his own privacies unrevealed. Neither Napoleon nor anyone else is allowed to know his true designs or his real activities; and of the vast mass of information he assembles, he allows only what he pleases to transpire. The rest remains locked in the drawers of his writing-desk, an innermost sanctuary into which none but himself may even peep —for it is his master passion to remain inscrutable, impenetrable, unfathomable; one holding a position of the first importance, but on whose behaviour no one can count. It is futile, therefore, for Napoleon to set spies to watch the watcher. Fouché makes fools of them; or is able to exploit their services by using them to carry back to their bamboozled employer reports that are opprobrious. As the years go by, the game of espionage and counter-espionage played by this pair of adversaries grows ever more crafty and spiteful, and their attitude towards one another frankly insincere—unless the epithet "frankly" be regarded as a misnomer even here, seeing that there could be no frankness, no clarity, between the man who wanted to be too much the master and the man who wanted to be too little the servant. The stronger Napoleon grew, the more of a nuisance did he find Fouché; and the stronger Fouché became, the more fiercely did he hate Napoleon.

By degrees this private enmity between two men of conflicting temperaments came to have as a reinforcing background the steadily increasing tensions of the epoch. From year to year there showed themselves more and

more clearly in France two opposing wills. The country craved for peace, whereas Napoleon desired war and again war and yet again war. The Bonaparte of the year eighteen hundred, the heir and the orderer of the revolution, was still in perfect harmony with his realm, his people, and his ministers; the Napoleon of the year eighteen hundred and four, the Emperor of the new decade, has long ceased to think of his realm or his people, for his gaze is now fixed on Europe, on the world, on immortal fame. Having performed in masterly fashion the tasks entrusted to him when he became Consul, the overflow of his energies leads him to impose upon himself new tasks, more difficult than those others, with the result that the man who brought order forth from chaos reverses his own achievement by reducing order to chaos once more.

This does not mean that his intelligence, clear as a diamond and as sharp, has become clouded or obtuse. Though he was carried away by the onrush of his elemental energy, his mind through it all remained magnificently lucid down to the last hour of his life when with tremulous hand he wrote his testament, the greatest of all his works. But in his later years his reason had lost its power to apply mundane standards of measurement—and how could it be otherwise in a man who had achieved the incredible? Was it not inevitable that one whose winnings in the game of life had been so unprecedently huge, one who had become accustomed to playing for such colossal stakes, should be dominated by the craving to outdo himself through the performance of yet

more incredible feats? But even in the maddest of his adventures, his head was no more turned than had been that of Alexander or Charles XII or Cortés. Like them, he had merely, in consequence of his amazing conquests, got out of touch with the measuring-rod of reality, forgotten the standards of the possible; and it was precisely this frenzy of action in one whose intellect remained calm and keen (a spiritual drama as splendid as the mistral blowing from a clear sky) which accounted for deeds that were simultaneously crimes committed by one man against hundreds of thousands, and stupendous enrichments of the records of mankind. Alexander's campaign from Greece to Hindustan, which still seems like a fairy-tale of today when we follow his route on the map; Cortés's invasion of Mexico; the march of Charles XII from Stockholm to Poltava; Napoleon's transference of an army of six hundred thousand men from Spain to Moscow—these manifestations of courage and overweening pride are in modern history what the struggles of Prometheus and the Titans were in Greek mythology; they are "hubris" and heroism conjoined, and unquestionably the almost sacrilegious maximum of human achievement. Towards this uttermost extreme Napoleon presses forward as soon as the imperial crown adorns his temples. His purposes expand with his success; his audacity grows with each additional victory; and at every new triumph over destiny there is intensified his determination to challenge destiny to do its worst. What could be more natural, than that his associates, those among them who are not deafened by the fan-

fare of the war bulletins and blinded by the glare of the military achievements, those among them who like Talleyrand and Fouché are both shrewd and thoughtful, should begin to quiver with apprehension? They are thinking of their own lifetime and of France; Napoleon is thinking only of posthumous fame, of his place in history.

This conflict between reason and passion, between logical temperaments and daimonic (a perpetually recurring motif in the drama of human affairs), becomes conspicuous once more in France soon after the turn of the century. War has made Napoleon great, has lifted him out of insignificance to place him on an imperial throne. It is only to be expected, therefore, that he should want to go on waging war, should be continually on the look-out for mightier foes than those he has hitherto defeated. The growth of his ambition is disclosed by the preposterous growth in the size of his armies. At Marengo, in 1800, he had won his victory with the aid of thirty thousand men; five years later, he has three hundred thousand in the field; and five years later still, he is raising a levy of a million soldiers, is draining all the young and virile blood from the war-weary land. By reckoning on the fingers, it was easy enough to make even the stupidest peasant or the most illiterate servitor in the baggage-train of his army understand that such "guerromanie" and "courromanie" (the latter word we owe to Stendhal) could not fail in the end to lead to disaster; and in conversation with Metternich, five years before Moscow, Fouché said propheti-

cally: "When he has defeated you, there will still be Russia, and, after that, China."

One person only cannot, or will not, see the realities of the situation—Napoleon himself. The man who has lived through the moments before Austerlitz, and thereafter those before Marengo and Eylau, moments into which so much of the essence of history was compressed, can no longer find agreeable tension or pleasant distraction in receiving uniformed toadies at court balls, in watching the tinselled glories of the opera, in listening to the tedious orations of deputies. He can only provide the requisite stimulus for his nerves by leading his troops in forced marches across vast countries, by grinding hostile armies to powder, by contemptuously moving kings from place to place like chessmen, or by seeing to it that the dome of the Invalides shall be resplendent with captured flags and that the newly founded treasure-house shall be crammed with the costly loot of Europe. He thinks now exclusively in regiments, in army corps, in armies. France, other countries, the whole world, have become for him mere stakes in his game, and France is for him a piece of property which he owns without reserve (la France, c'est moi"). But some among his people cling obstinately to the notion that France belongs to herself, and they object to the inhabitants of that fair land being regarded only as instruments for making all the members of a Corsican family into kings and queens and for transforming Europe into a Bonapartist entailed estate. With increasing anger they watch year after year while the conscription lists are posted in

every town, and while the lads of eighteen and nineteen are torn from their homes to perish on the torrid frontiers of Portugal or in the snowy wastes of Poland and of Russia—to perish there for no reason, or at least for none which any sane man can discover. Thus there is a growing cleavage, an ever more embittered hostility, between the ruler whose gaze is fixed on his star, and the clear-sighted among his subjects, who see the weariness and the impatience of their own land. Since he grows more and more autocratic, and will no longer listen to advice from anyone, they begin to meditate on the possibility of stopping the mad circlings of this wheel before it plunges into the abyss. Plainly the moment must come when reason and passion will part company to enter opposing camps, when open war will break out between the Emperor and the ablest of his servants.

The veiled opposition to Napoleon's war-mania and megalomania brings together in the end the two among his councillors who are most fiercely at odds one with the other: Fouché and Talleyrand. They are the most capable of his ministers; from the psychological standpoint they are the two most interesting men of the day; and if they do not love one another it is probably because they are too much alike. Both are sober-minded realists, lucid thinkers, cynics, and wholehearted disciples of Machiavelli. They were both schooled in the Church and subsequently annealed in the fires of the revolution; they are characterized by the same cold-blooded unscrupulousness in matters of money and honour; and

both of them serve with the same conscienceless disloyalty the Republic, the Directory, the Consulate, the Emperor, and the King. Arch-impersonators of inconstancy, these two players are continually encountering one another on the stage of history, dressed now as revolutionists, now as senators, now as ministers of State, and now as servants of the King; and just because they are of the same spiritual calibre and because kindred diplomatic rôles are assigned to them, they hate one another with the clear-sighted coolness and pertinacity of rivals who know one another through and through.

Both of them are of a perfectly amoral type, and this accounts for their likeness in character, whereas the differences between them depend upon differences in origin. Talleyrand, as Duke of Périgord, was a member of the old noblesse, and, becoming Bishop of Autun in 1788 when only thirty-four years of age, was wearing the violet robe as spiritual lord of a French province at a time when Joseph Fouché, sprung from the lower middle class and clad in a shabby cassock, a young man of no account, was no more than a semi-clerical usher earning a minimal salary, and trying to hammer a knowledge of mathematics and Latin into the heads of a dozen or two of youngsters within monastery walls. Talleyrand was agent-general of the French clergy and French envoy to England when Fouché, by cajolery and perseverance, was managing to secure election as deputy to the Convention. Talleyrand came from on high into the revolution, a grandee stepping down from his chariot into the third estate, and greeted there with respectful

acclamations; but Fouché had laboriously to intrigue his way upwards into that same estate. These differences of origin dyed with differing tints two persons whose fundamental qualities were identical. Talleyrand, the man with distinguished manners, serves (when he has to serve) with the cool and polished indifference of a grand seigneur; but Fouché serves with the earnest and self-interested zeal of an aspiring official. Even in their likenesses, they are different. Though they both love money, Talleyrand loves it after the fashion of a man of blue blood, that he may squander it at the gaming-table or upon the fair sex; but Fouché loves it shopkeeper fashion, that he may add piece to piece, and use it capitalistically to breed more. For Talleyrand, money and power are only means to enjoyment, things which enable him to become lord over all the pleasures of the senses, luxury, women, art treasures, choice food, costly wines; but Fouché, even after he has become a multi-millionaire, is Spartan and monastic in his habits, and continues to look after the pence. Neither of them can wholly escape the influences of birth and early training. In the wildest days of the Terror, the Duke of Périgord never becomes a true man of the people, is never a typical republican; and Joseph Fouché, in later days, when he is Duke of Otranto and wears court dress, never becomes a genuine "aristo."

Talleyrand alone is resplendent, is fascinating, and is perhaps the more notable of the two—who are both men of great moment. Versatile, highly cultured, nourished in the traditions of the eighteenth century, and

with a taste for music and the fine arts, Talleyrand finds the game of diplomacy an agreeable and stimulating pastime (one among many); but he detests work. He will never if he can help it write a letter for himself; a refined voluptuary, he must have all the hodman's work done for him by the sons of Martha, and will then indifferently pick up the results with his slender, beringed fingers; and he will not weary himself with the labour of finical investigation, being satisfied with the intuition which enables him at lightning speed to effect a comprehensive survey of the most involved situations. A psychologist both by nature and by nurture, he is able, as Napoleon said, to read every one's thoughts; and, without giving direct advice, he can confirm people in their inmost purposes. His specialties are bold changes of front, swift flashes of insight, supple expedients in moments of danger; and he contemptuously leaves to others the detail work, the grunting and sweating under heavy loads, the heat and burden of the day. In conformity with this fondness for the minimum of effort, for the most concentrated form of intellectual mastery, is his peculiar gift for the utterance of brilliant dicta, for aphorism. He never pens a long report, but sums up a situation or describes a man in a pithy phrase. Fouché, on the other hand, is utterly devoid of this talent for rapid survey; flying industriously hither and thither like a bee, he, with much labour and pains collects his materials from a thousand sources, and then sifts and arranges and resifts until he has secured irrefutable results. His method is that of the analyst, whereas Talleyrand's

is that of the clairvoyant; his supreme endowment is industry, whereas Talleyrand's is a faculty for swift penetration. No playwright could have invented two such perfect counterparts (unlike in their likeness, and akin in their very differences) as history has staged for us in the slothful and brilliant extemporizer Talleyrand and the argus-eyed unsleeping calculator Fouché—has staged beside Napoleon, beside the all-round genius who combines the talents of both, wide range of view and insight into details near at hand, aquiline passion and ant-like industry, world-knowledge and world-vision.

But never does hatred flame up more fiercely than between different species of the same race. That is why Talleyrand and Fouché detest one another, under stress of fundamental instinct and mutual understanding. From the days of their first acquaintance, Talleyrand the grand seigneur is hostile to Fouché the detail worker, the busy collector of news, the unemotional talebearer and spy; whilst Fouché is outraged by Talleyrand's frivolous and spendthrift ways, and by the born nobleman's contemptuous and negligently feminine indolence. Their references to one another are envenomed dagger-thrusts. Talleyrand says with a cutting smile: "One understands why Monsieur Fouché despises his fellow-men; he has made so close a study of himself." Fouché, in turn, when Talleyrand is made Vice-Grand-Elector of the Empire, remarks mockingly: "That was the only vice he lacked." When either can put a spoke in the other's wheel, the chance is not to be missed; and each seizes every opportunity of doing the other an ill turn.

The importance of the two men, the agile one and the diligent, to Napoleon as ministers is increased by the way in which their qualities dovetail. It suits his book admirably that they should loathe one another as they do, for this makes them keep one another under observation more effectively than could a hundred paid spies. Fouché promptly reports every fresh instance of Talleyrand's venality, debauchery, or neglect; while Talleyrand retaliates with accounts of Fouché's rascalities and intrigues. Napoleon is well pleased, feeling that the upshot is better service from this strange pair of reciprocally critical servitors. His knowledge of psychology enables him to turn their rivalry to good account, by egging them on against one another and thus making them hold one another in check.

For years, Paris is in ecstasies as it watches this long-drawn-out duel between Fouché and Talleyrand. The unending variations in the comedy staged on the steps of the throne are as amusing as one of Molière's plays. How delicious it is when the Minister of Police and the Minister for Foreign Affairs snarl and scratch and spit, while their master looks down with Olympian serenity upon the quarrel which helps him in his own game. But whereas he and all the other onlookers are expecting this lively cat-and-dog farce to have an indefinitely long run, the two chief actors tire of their rôles as antagonists, and put their heads together for earnest collaboration. Their common hostility to their master has become stronger than their rivalry. Eighteen-eight has come, and Na-

poleon is beginning another war, the most useless, the most purposeless, of all his wars, the raid into Spain. In 1805, he had defeated Austria and Russia; in 1807, he had shattered and subdued Prussia, and had reduced the German and Italian States to vassalage; and he had no warrant whatever for hostility towards Spain. But dull-witted Brother Joseph (in a few years, Napoleon will frankly declare that he sacrificed himself for block-heads) wants a throne like the rest of them; and, since there is none vacant at the moment, the best thing will be, in defiance of the law of nations, to seize that of Spain. Once more, therefore, the drums rattle; once more the battalions march; once more the arduously collected funds stream forth from the treasury; and once more Napoleon is fired by the lust for victory. Even the stupidest and most insensitive are becoming aware of the folly of incessant war-making. Both Fouché and Talleyrand strongly disapprove of this utterly gratuitous war, which will drain the blood of France for seven years to come; and, since the Emperor will not listen to remonstrance from either of them, the two draw together covertly. They know that letters of counsel will be unavailing, for Napoleon will angrily throw them into the waste-paper basket. It is a long time, now, since the statesmen have been able to make headway against the field-marshals, the generals, the men of the sword; or against the members of the Corsican clan, every one of whom aspires to conceal beneath an ermine robe the vestiges of an inglorious past. They decide, therefore, upon a public protest, which, since officially they are

muzzled, is to take the form of a political pantomime, a theatrical coup which shall proclaim that they have not only sworn a peace but have entered into an alliance.

We do not know whether it was Talleyrand or Fouché who staged the scene so dramatically. This much is certain, that, while Napoleon was on the Spanish front, Paris was making high festival, having got used to the perpetual recurrence of hostilities as people get used to the snows of winter and the thunderstorms of summer. Thus it comes to pass that one December evening during the year 1808, when Napoleon, uncomfortably housed in Valladolid, is writing army orders, the Grand Chamberlain's mansion in the Rue Saint-Florentin is ablaze with the light of a thousand candles and echoing to the strains of music. Fair ladies (beloved of Talleyrand), all the members of the smart set, leading statesmen, and foreign ambassadors, are assembled in full force. There is a buzz of cheerful conversation among the elders, while the younger folk are dancing merrily. Then something happens which reduces the talkers to silence and interrupts the dance. A new guest has entered the room, and, to the general astonishment, it is Fouché, the "lean Cassius," whom, as every one knows, Talleyrand cannot abide, and who, therefore, has never before appeared beneath this roof. But lo! with studied courtesy the host limps to meet the Minister of Police and greets him affectionately. Arm in arm they walk across the hall to enter one of the side rooms, where they seat themselves on a sofa and converse in low tones, while the onlookers are agog with curiosity. Next morn-

ing all Paris has learned of the sensational event. Every one is talking about the sudden and publicly paraded reconciliation; and every one understands its significance. When cat and dog enter into a pact, against whom can it be directed if not the cook? Friendship between Fouché and Talleyrand must mean that the servants are in open revolt against their master. At once the spies and the talebearers set busily to work, in the hope of unravelling the threads of this conspiracy. In the embassies, pens squeak in the writing of urgent reports; Metternich sends an express to Vienna, bearing information to the effect that "this reconciliation would seem to harmonize with the wishes of a completely outwearied nation"; while Napoleon's brothers and sisters sound the alarm, and in their turn dispatch envoys hotfoot to the Emperor.

The couriers make a quick journey of it to Spain; and Napoleon, having read the news they bring, decides on an even quicker journey of it back to Paris. He consults no one, but bites his lips, and orders preparations to be made for a prompt departure. The information that Fouché and Talleyrand have drawn together pricks him more than any defeat on the field of battle. He races to his capital with crazy speed. Leaving Valladolid on the 17th of the month, on the 18th he is in Burgos, on the 19th in Bayonne. Halting nowhere, making the postilions flog the post-horses to the top of their speed, on the 22nd he drives up to the Tuileries like a whirlwind, and by the 23rd he is ready to counter Talley-

rand's witty comedy by a piece of his own staging. The whole troop of gold-braided courtiers, ministers, and generals must appear as supers, for there is to be a public demonstration of the Emperor's forcible way of crushing resistance to his will. Fouché has already been summoned to his presence overnight, and given a rating behind closed doors. The offender, who is used to his master's tantrums, accepts the shower of abuse unprotestingly, being content to put in an adroit word of exculpation now and again and to make his escape as soon as possible. For this servile creature, thinks Napoleon, a passing kick will suffice; but Talleyrand, being accounted the mightier of the two culprits, must take his gruelling in full view of the world. The scene has often been described, and history scarcely knows any more dramatic. At first the Emperor confines himself to vague generalities concerning intrigues that have been going on during his absence; but then, exasperated by Talleyrand's impassivity, he makes a direct onslaught on this chief object of his wrath, who is standing in an easy pose near the fireplace, one arm gracefully resting on the marble mantelpiece. The wording of the lecture has been carefully chosen to produce its due effect upon the assembled courtiers, and through them on the public at large; but this is one of the occasions when wrath gets the upper hand, and Napoleon belards the experienced statesman, a man fifteen years his senior, with the foulest abuse. Talleyrand is a thief and a renegade; he is forsworn; he is a venal wretch who would barter his own father for pelf; he is the real author of the death of the

Duke of Enghien and no less so of the Spanish war. Two drunken fishwives quarrelling in the market-place could not find choicer invectives than those spat forth by the Emperor at the Duke of Périgord and Prince of Benevento, the veteran of the revolution, and the doyen of French statesmen.

The listeners are dumbfounded. Every one is uneasy. All feel that it is Napoleon himself who is cutting a poor figure. Talleyrand, however, has the hide of a rhinoceros. Legend relates that on one occasion he fell asleep over a pamphlet denouncing his own misdemeanours; and now he gives no sign that a word of the tirade reaches his ears, being far too proud to be ruffled by such a tempest. When it has blown itself out, he limps across the beeswaxed floor, and in the anteroom murmurs one of those polished sarcasms which are far more deadly than the bluster to which he has just been exposed. As the footman is helping him on with his cloak, he says equably: "What a pity that so great a man should have such bad manners!"

That same evening, Talleyrand is deprived of the office of Grand Chamberlain; and all who would like to get their knives into Fouché look eagerly through the ensuing numbers of the "Moniteur" for news of his dismissal from the post of Minister of Police. But they look in vain. Fouché remains. As is his invariable custom, he has been careful to provide himself with a stalking-horse. Collot d'Herbois, it will be remembered, his associate as mitrailleur of Lyons, is sent to the fever-stricken penal settlement in French Guiana; Fouché

remains. Babeuf, his confederate in the struggle against the Directory, is executed; Fouché remains. His protector Barras has to flee the country; Fouché remains. This time, too, only Talleyrand, the front-rank man, pays the scot by losing his job; Fouché remains. Governments, political forms, opinions, and incumbents of office change; everything crumbles to dust and is swept away in the raging storms of the turn of the century; only one man is to be found through it all occupying the same post, under varying masters and amid manifold vicissitudes of mood—Joseph Fouché.

Fouché remains in a position of power. Nay more, his influence is increased now that the ablest, the most versatile, and the most independent of Napoleon's advisers has been retired from office and replaced by a man whose only thought is to do exactly what he is told. Still more important is it, not only that Talleyrand, the rival, is off the stage, but also that Napoleon, the troublesome master, is absent for a while. Now that 1809 has come, the Emperor has started a new war; with Austria this time.

Nothing could suit Fouché better than that Napoleon should be away from Paris, and no longer able to supervise everyday affairs. No matter whether it is Austria or Spain or Poland. The farther, the better. If he would betake himself to Egypt once more, that would be best of all! He shines with so strong a light, that he seems to put every one and everything near him into the shade; and his masterful superiority paralyses all lesser wills. But

when he is hundreds of miles away, commanding battles, thinking out campaigns, Fouché, left to his own devices at home, is to some extent his own master, can play providence a little, and need no longer be a mere marionette.

Besides, Fouché's chance has come at last. This year 1809 is fateful for Napoleon. Though he is ostensibly successful, his military position is one of greater peril than he has ever known before. In subjugated Prussia, in imperfectly subdued Germany, there are scattered in isolated garrisons tens of thousands of almost defenceless Frenchmen to keep watch upon hundreds of thousands of fighting men, who are only awaiting the call to arms. Another Austrian victory like that at Aspern, and there would have been a rising all over Germany, and in France as well, for she, too, is weary of war. Nor is all going well in the south. The rough way in which the Pope has been handled has aroused ill-feeling throughout Italy, just as the humiliation of Prussia has aroused ill-feeling throughout Germany. If, then, a shrewd thrust could now be delivered against the militarist imperial power, perhaps the iron colossus, uncertainly balanced, astraddle from the Ebro to the Vistula, might be overthrown. The British, Napoleon's archenemies, are planning such a thrust. They determine that, while the Emperor's troops are dispersed at Aspern, Rome, and Lisbon, they will force their way into the heart of France. First they will seize Dunkerque; then they will occupy Antwerp and foment a rising in Brabant. Napoleon and the best of the French fighting

forces, with the most noted field-marshals and the heavy guns, being all on foreign soil, France lies open to attack.

But Fouché is on the spot; Fouché who in 1793, under the Convention, had learned how to get together tens of thousands of recruits within a few weeks. He has had abundant energy throughout the intervening sixteen years, but his only chance of displaying it has been in the underground work of petty intrigue. Now his chance has come. He will be able to show the French nation and the world that Joseph Fouché is something more than Napoleon's puppet; that in case of need he can be as resolute, as energetic, and as purposive in his activities as the Emperor himself. Seizing this heaven-sent opportunity, he can give plain demonstration that the power of shaping destiny, whether in the military field or in the moral, is not entrusted to the Corsican adventurer alone. In his proclamations, he boldly, challengingly, emphasizes the fact that the autocrat is not indispensable. "Let us prove to Europe that, while the genius of Napoleon confers glory on France, his presence is not necessary for driving back her enemies," he writes to the mayor, and proceeds to suit his actions to the words. Learning on August 31st that the English have landed on the island of Walcheren, he uses his powers as Minister of Police and acting Minister for Home Affairs to call up the National Guards, who since the active days of the revolution have been working quietly in their villages as tailors and smiths, as bootmakers and husbandmen. The other ministers are outraged. Does he dare to order such a step on his own

initiative, without special instructions from the Emperor? The War Minister, above all, is greatly incensed at this civilian's inroad into his sacred province. Fouché ought to have asked permission in Schönbrunn prior to ordering mobilization. Why not wait to hear what Napoleon has to say before disturbing the country? But it will take a fortnight to get an answer from the Emperor, and Fouché is not afraid of disturbing the country. Surely Napoleon never hesitates to do that? (In his innermost soul, Fouché wants to disturb the country, and would not be sorry if there were an uproar!) Steadfastly he accepts full responsibility. In the Emperor's name, all the able-bodied males in the threatened provinces are summoned to make ready for the work of defence—in the Emperor's name, though the Emperor has not as yet heard a word of the matter. As a second piece of audacity, Fouché, having thus improvised a northern army, appoints to command it Bernadotte whom Napoleon hates, and whom he has ostracized, though Bernadotte is married to Joseph Bonaparte's sister-in-law. But Fouché recalls him, regardless of the Emperor, his fellow-ministers, and his own enemies. He does not care whether at this stage the Emperor would approve his measures. He is looking for justification by success.

Such boldness in decisive moments gives Fouché something of true greatness. Capable, vigorous, and diligent, he always craves for great enterprises, and is assigned only small ones, which are child's play to him. It is natural, therefore, that his superfluous energy should seek an outlet in malicious and usually senseless

intrigues. But at moments when, as now, as formerly in Lyons, and as subsequently in Paris after Napoleon's fall, he is faced by a task momentous in history and commensurate with his powers, he deals with it in masterly fashion. The town of Flushing, which Napoleon in his letters describes as impregnable, is, as Fouché has foreseen, taken by the English in a few days. But meanwhile the army raised by the acting Minister for Home Affairs on his own responsibility has had leisure to set the defences of Antwerp upon a sound footing, and consequently the British invasion of the Netherlands is a disastrous failure. For the first time since Napoleon's rise to power, one of his ministers has ventured of his own free will to run up a flag, hoist sails, and set a course —thus saving France in a critical hour. Thenceforward, Fouché has enhanced self-confidence and holds a new rank in the world.

At Schönbrunn, meanwhile, complaint after complaint has come to hand from the Arch-Chancellor and from the Minister for War, accusing Fouché of exceeding the powers permissible to a civilian. He has called up the National Guards; and has put the country on a war footing. But, surprisingly enough, Napoleon, before he has heard of the successful results, writes to endorse Fouché's actions, and to commend the energy and resolution displayed. The Arch-Chancellor is severely reprimanded: "I am extremely annoyed that, in these extraordinary circumstances, you have made so little use of the powers I entrusted to you. At the first rumour of a raid you ought to have called up twenty thousand,

forty thousand, or sixy thousand National Guards." To the Minister for War he writes: "I have eyes only for Monsieur Fouché, who did his best, and saw that it would never do to persist in a dangerous and dishonourable inaction." Thus not merely has Fouché outdone his over-cautious and incapable colleagues, but these latter have been intimidated by Napoleon's approval of Fouché's action. Despite all that Talleyrand and the Arch-Chancellor can say, Fouché remains for a time, under the Emperor, the leading man in France. He alone, among all subjects, has shown that he can command as well as obey.

Again and again we find evidence of Joseph Fouché's capacity for rising to the occasion in moments of supreme peril. Confront him with the most difficult situation, and his boldness, his energy, and his comprehensive insight will enable him to cope with it. Give him the most tangled of knots, and he will find a way of loosening the strings. But well as he knows how to take hold, he is not a master of the sister art, that of letting go. Having thrust his hand into an imbroglio, he cannot withdraw it. As soon as he has untied a difficult knot, his gambler's instinct drives him to complicate the issues once more. So it happens on this occasion. Thanks to his promptness, his nimbleness, and his resolution, the mischievous flank attack has been repelled. After terrible losses in men and material, and a still greater loss of prestige, the British have re-embarked the shattered remnants of the invading army and have sailed home across the North Sea. Now the disband can be sounded, the

National Guards can be thankfully and honourably dismissed. But Fouché's ambition has tasted blood. It was splendid to play the emperor, to sound the call to the colours in three provinces, to issue orders, to compose stirring appeals, to give public addresses, to defy one's pusillanimous colleagues. Is it all to be over and done with now, just when one is beginning to develop one's powers to the full, and to enjoy their exercise? Fouché has no taste for such a return to the ordinary. Much better to continue playing the game of attack and defence—even if the attackers have to be conjured up out of the imagination. He wants to go on raising an alarm, disturbing people's minds, arousing the country to a stormy movement of self-protection. With this end in view, he commands a fresh mobilization, to make ready for an expected British landing at Marseilles. The National Guards are levied throughout Piedmont and Provence, and even in Paris—to the general astonishment, seeing that not a trace of an enemy can be discerned on any coast of France, nor even in the offing. The only reason for all these tuckets and excursions is that the fever has got into Fouché's blood; that he has been bitten anew, after long abstinence, by the desire for mobilizing men and organizing things; and that, in the temporary absence of the ruler of the world, he is able to give free vent to a long-repressed lust for action.

"But against whom are all these armies directed?" asks the country, in growing bewilderment. There are no signs of another British attempt at invasion. By degrees even those among his colleagues who are friendly

FOUCHÉ, DUKE OF OTRANTO

FROM A PAINTING BY CLAUDE MARIE DUBUFE

to him become uneasy, wondering what on earth the inscrutable fellow can be up to with his crazy mobilizations. It never occurs to them that Fouché is merely intoxicated by the exercise of his craving for activity, that he is amusing himself finely, and that the levyings have no other meaning whatever. Since, look where you will, not a glimmer of a hostile bayonet can be seen, not a sign of an enemy against whom the daily increasing preparations for the use of armed force might be directed, people begin to think, in spite of themselves, that the acting Minister for Home Affairs must be animated by secret ambition, or must entertain a far-reaching design. Some suppose him to be planning a revolt. Others think that his idea is, in the event of a second Aspern or of an attempt on the Emperor's life more successful than that of Friedrich Staps, to re-establish the Republic. The upshot of these musings is that letter after letter reaches headquarters at Schönbrunn declaring that if Fouché has not gone mad he must be a dangerous conspirator. In the end Napoleon, despite his recent commendation, begins to think there must be something wrong. The man is suffering from an overweening sense of self-importance, and his pride must be humbled. The tone of the Emperor's letters abruptly changes. He reprimands the minister sharply, calls him "a Don Quixote tilting at windmills," and writes in the familiar harsh strain: "All the reports which come to hand tell me that the National Guards are being called up in Piedmont, Languedoc, Provence, and Dauphiné! What the devil is this for, seeing that there is no urgent reason for any-

thing of the sort, and that it ought never to have been done without my orders?" Fouché, therefore, sore at heart, must give up playing the master, must lay down the reins of office as Minister for Home Affairs, and must go back to the corner where he works inconspicuously as police guardian to His Majesty the Emperor, who is returning crowned with glory, but returning too soon for Joseph Fouché.

Still, even though he has been over-zealous, there can be no doubt that Fouché did the right thing at the most timely moment, when the country was in danger and his colleagues were afraid to lift a finger. Napoleon can no longer withhold from him the honour which has been granted to so many others. A new nobility is springing up from the blood-drenched soil of France; titles, thick as blackberries, are being granted to generals, ministers, and understrappers as well; now it is the turn of Fouché, the aristocratophobe of earlier days, to become an aristocrat himself.

He is, indeed, already a count, but no great to-do has been made about this lesser title. Now the ex-Jacobin is to climb to a much higher rung upon the airy ladder of names. On August 15, 1809, at Schönbrunn, in the splendid palace of His Apostolic Majesty the Emperor of Austria, the sometime Corsican lieutenant signs, seals, and delivers a complaisant sheet of donkey's hide, in virtue of which parchment the ex-communist and ex-seminary-teacher Joseph Fouché may henceforward style himself (give respectful hearing!) Duke of

Otranto. He did not fight at Otranto and he has never set eyes on the place, but the title has a rich foreign resonance which makes it eminently fitted to cloak the personality of the man who was once an ardent French republican. When it is properly articulated, who is likely to remember that it is only a new name for Joseph Fouché, that the Duke of Otranto was the mitrailleur of Lyons, the purveyor of pain de l'unité, and the confiscator of private property? That nothing may be lacking to his ennoblement, he is supplied also with the insignia of dukedom, with a brand-new coat-of-arms.

Let us examine this coat-of-arms, for its symbolism is remarkable. Are we to suppose that Napoleon himself excogitated its allusions to the new duke's peculiarities, or did the official heraldic expert permit himself the luxury of a sly joke at the latter's expense? However this may be, the arms of the Duke of Otranto display as centrepiece a golden pillar, well suited to a man who is so passionately fond of money. Round the aureate column winds a snake, and surely this must have been an allusion to our friend's diplomatic suppleness? Napoleon was well served in his Herald's College. More characteristic armorial bearings could not possibly have been found for Joseph Fouché.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STRUGGLE WITH THE EMPEROR

1810

A SALIENT example degrades or uplifts an entire generation. When such a man as Napoleon Bonaparte appears upon the stage of history, those who come near him are offered a choice. Either they can dwindle into insignificance in face of his greatness; or else, fired by his example, they can strain their own capacities to the uttermost. Men who came into contact with Napoleon had to be either his slaves or his rivals, for a man of such stupendous proportions cannot, in the long run, tolerate mediocrity among his associates.

Fouché was one of those whom Napoleon had thrown off their balance. His spirit had been poisoned by the unceasing spectacle of insatiable ambition; he had succumbed to an elemental impulse to outdo himself unremittingly; like his master, he wanted perpetually to widen the limits of his power; for him, too, quiet content with the extant had become impossible. Great, therefore, was his chagrin on the day when Napoleon returned in triumph from Schönbrunn to take the reins into his own hands once more. How delightful had these last months been, when he could follow his own bent, raise armies, issue proclamations, shape a bold course

over the heads of his colleagues, be at length lord in the land and gambler-in-chief at the great roulette board of human destiny. Now Joseph Fouché must resume the comparatively humble rôle of Minister of Police, must keep watch upon malcontents and journalistic spouters, must compile day after day a tedious bulletin pieced together out of the reports of spies, must take note of such trifles as whether Madame de Talleyrand had a new lover, and who had been hardest hit by yesterday's collapse of values on the stock exchange. Since he had had a chance of guiding the ship of State, of playing a considerable part in world politics, these matters had come to seem bagatelles to his restless and venturesome spirit. He was continually haunted by the notion of showing once more that even in Napoleon's world there was room for a Fouché to do great deeds.

Yet what is there left for him to do in a world monopolized by a man who has already done everything; who has subdued Germany, Austria, Spain, and Italy; to whom the reigning representative of the oldest dynasty in Europe gives his daughter in marriage; who has humiliated the Pope and made an end of the ancient hegemony of Rome; who has founded a vast empire centring in Paris? Spurred on by ambition, Fouché looks eagerly in all directions, on the watch for an opportunity. There is, indeed, one hopeful possibility. The topmost pinnacle is still lacking to the edifice of Napoleonic world dominion. Peace with England has not yet been signed. To bring about this peace unaided, without Na-

poleon and against Napoleon, now becomes Fouché's chief purpose.

In 1809 and 1810, just as in 1795, England is the arch-enemy, is France's most dangerous adversary. Behind the walls of Acre had been the British; thwarting him in Spain and Portugal are the British; at all the ends of the earth, Napoleon's will is frustrated by the calculating skill and the methodical energy of this island people: and while he has been able in their despite to overrun the greater part of continental Europe, they have maintained their supremacy against him on the larger moiety of the world: the sea. He cannot come to final grips with them nor they with him, though for so many years each party to the struggle has been strenuously endeavouring to make an end of the other.

In this futile combat, both have been terribly mauled, disastrously weakened; and in truth both of them (though neither will admit it) are growing weary of the struggle. Banks in France, Antwerp, and Hamburg have been forced to close their doors because of the British strangle-hold on international commerce; for the same reason, ships lie rotting in the Pool of London, unable to discharge freight for which no market can be found; the funds are steadily falling both in London and in Paris; and on either side of the Channel, merchants, financiers, and intellectuals, who want to promote an understanding, are negotiating timidly and secretly. But Napoleon thinks peace less important than that his dull-witted brother Joseph should keep the crown of Spain and that his sister Caroline should re-

main Queen of Naples, so he breaks off the negotiations (which are being laboriously carried on by way of Holland), and with his mailed fist compels his allies to close their ports to British shipping. Letters go to Russia, too, demanding under threats that the Tsar shall join in enforcing the Continental System. Once more passion is getting the better of reason, and the war seems likely to go on for ever unless, at the last moment, the peace party has courage enough to pass from words to actions.

In these prematurely interrupted negotiations with England, Fouché had played a part. He had found an intermediary for the Emperor and the King of Holland, a French financier, who had got into touch with a Dutch financier, who in his turn had sought out an Englishman of the same kidney. Along this well-tried golden bridge there moved to and fro (as in every war and during all epochs) the secret messages of those who were endeavouring to bring about an understanding between the belligerents. But now the Emperor has bluntly declared that there are to be no further negotiations. This does not suit Fouché. To chaffer, to make promises, to lead people by the nose; these are his chief delights. He therefore comes to a bold decision. He will proceed with the matter on his own responsibility. That is to say, he will ostensibly be acting under orders from Napoleon, so that British agents and the British Foreign Office may lend a ready ear; though in reality no one but the Duke of Otranto is pulling the strings. A mad trick, an impudent misuse of the imperial name and of his own ministerial powers, an absolutely unprecedented esca-

pade. But what does Fouché, the born intriguer, find more entrancing than such ambiguous and labyrinthine hazards, in which he can mystify three or four of his fellow-players simultaneously? He enjoys carrying on his own game behind Napoleon's back as much as a turbulent schoolboy enjoys making faces when the master is not looking; and, just like such a youngster, he will risk a wigging in the indulgence of his own humour. A hundred times in his career he diverts himself by such political pranks, but assuredly not one of the others was so foolhardy as this; in not one of them did he play so heedlessly with fire for the gratification of his own self-will as when, apparently in the name of the Emperor but really in defiance of that potentate's express commands, he continued pourparlers with the British Foreign Office concerning peace between France and England.

The intrigue is brilliantly planned. His agent-in-chief is one of his obscure financial tools, the banker Ouvrard, a man of shady antecedents, who has already tasted prison or been in danger of it. Napoleon detests the fellow because of his dubious reputation, but Fouché, who operates through him on the stock exchange, is less sensitive about such matters. Fouché has helped Ouvrard out of difficulties more than once, has a hold on him, can ride him on the curb. The next link in the chain is a Dutch banker named Labouchere, a man of good social position in Holland, and son-in-law of the London banker Baring, who is in touch with the British cabinet. All parties to the affair, Fouché excepted, are acting in

good faith. Even Ouvrard honestly believes what he is saying when he assures Labouchere and the Dutch government that Fouché has his instructions from the Emperor. The British authorities take these assurances at their face value, and believe themselves to be treating with Napoleon, when in reality they are negotiating with no one more important than Joseph Fouché, who, of course, is careful at this stage to keep his master in ignorance. He wants to let the fruit ripen, to clear obstacles out of the path, and then, disclosing himself proudly as the god from the machine, to tell the Emperor and the French nation: "Here is the peace with England. The boon you so earnestly desired, and which none of your diplomats could get for you, I, the Duke of Otranto, have secured for you unaided."

But, sad to say, through an unlucky chance (quite a small matter), this deep-laid scheme goes awry. It is blown upon prematurely. Napoleon has come to Holland with his new wife, Marie Louise, on a visit to Brother Louis. For a time politics are forgotten amid the tumult of a ceremonious welcome. One day, however, King Louis, who naturally believes like every one else that the Emperor is the originator of the secret negotiations with Britain, asks his brother what progress the pourparlers are making and whether an understanding is likely to be reached soon. Napoleon is astounded. Then it flashes across his mind that recently he caught sight of the detested Ouvrard in Antwerp. What was the man doing there? What do these comings and goings

between England and Holland signify? Concealing his surprise, he begs King Louis, as if it were a matter of little moment, to let him see the Dutch banker's correspondence. Louis complies, and on the way back to Paris Napoleon reads the details of a negotiation concerning which he had not had the slightest inkling. Great is his wrath when he realizes that the Duke of Otranto has once more been on a poaching expedition beyond the limits of his own game preserve. In the matter of cunning, however, the Emperor takes a leaf out of Fouché's book, and for the time being hides his knowledge behind a mask of civility, lest Fouché, taking fright, should be given a chance of covering up his tracks. The only man whom Napoleon takes into his confidence at first is Savary, the Duke of Rovigo, commandant of the gendarmerie. Savary is ordered to arrest Ouvrard promptly but inconspicuously, and to seize all the banker's papers.

Not until three hours after this order has been issued, on June 2nd, does the Emperor summon his ministers to Saint-Cloud, where, without circumlocution, he asks the Duke of Otranto what information the latter can give concerning the recent journeys of Ouvrard, and whether Fouché had himself sent Ouvrard to Amsterdam. Fouché, startled, but far from realizing as yet that he is caught in a snare, behaves as he usually does when he is in a tight place; he does what he did with Chaumette in the days of the revolution and with Babeuf under the Directory, and tries to save himself by disavowing and discrediting his tool or his accomplice. "Oh, yes, Ouv-

rard—an importunate fellow who tries to thrust fingers into every pie. Besides, the whole affair is childish, a thing to laugh at, not to take seriously." But Napoleon is tenacious. "This is not an insignificant intrigue," he insists. "It is an unprecedented act of disloyalty when a minister presumes to treat with the enemy behind his sovereign's back, to discuss conditions which that sovereign does not know of and probably would not approve. It is a dereliction of duty so grave that not even the weakest of governments would put up with it. Ouvrard must be instantly arrested." This last statement touches Fouché on the raw. Arrest Ouvrard, who would probably thereupon blab the whole thing! So Fouché tries one expedient after another in the hope of inducing Napoleon to withdraw the vexatious order. But the Emperor, who knows that Savary already has the banker in safe keeping, listens to Fouché in scornful silence. He has no doubt who has been the originator of this hazardous scheme, and the papers seized at Ouvrard's soon disclose the whole network of the intrigue.

The storm bursts, and the tensions that have accumulated during long years of suspicion are discharged. Next day being Sunday, Napoleon goes to mass, for the man who only a few years before had held the Pope in duress has become pious now that he is His Apostolic Majesty's son-in-law. Thereafter he holds a morning council, to which all the ministers and court dignitaries have been summoned. All but one, that is to say. The Duke of Otranto has not been invited. The Emperor tells his advisers to take their seats at the table, and then,

without preamble, he says: "What would you think of a minister of State who, taking advantage of his position, should without his sovereign's knowledge open communications with foreigners, should begin diplomatic negotiations upon a basis of his own imagining, and should thus compromise State policy? What punishment do our codes provide for such an offence?" Having spoken thus harshly, Napoleon looks round the circle, expecting that his counsellors and creatures will hasten to say that the offender should be exiled, or grossly humiliated in some other fashion. But the ministers, though they are quick to guess at whom the shaft is aimed, maintain a troubled silence. At bottom they approve of Fouché's energetic effort on behalf of peace; and as disgruntled servants they are one and all glad that their fellow-servant should have dealt their master, the autocrat, so shrewd a blow. Talleyrand (who, though he is no longer in office, has been asked to attend as a notable) smiles inwardly as he recalls his own humiliation of two years back; and, since he loves neither Napoleon nor Fouché, he is delighted at the imbroglio in which the two have become involved. At length the Arch-Chancellor Cambacérès breaks the silence, and says: "Certainly such an error deserves severe punishment, unless the offender has been misled by excessive zeal." "Excessive zeal!" exclaims Napoleon angrily, for the answer is not what he wants. He is not looking for attempts at exculpation, but would like to be advised to make an example of the guilty minister, an example which will check this disquieting inclination towards in-

dependence. Now he tells the whole story, says that Fouché must be dismissed, and asks for suggestions as to a successor.

But still the advisers are loath to advise. In all of them, dread of Fouché is only second to dread of Napoleon. At length Talleyrand comes to the rescue with a quip, as his custom is when the situation grows prickly. Turning to his neighbour he says in an undertone, but audibly enough: "No doubt Monsieur Fouché has been very much to blame, and for my part I should certainly replace him. I should replace him by—Monsieur Fouché." Dissatisfied with his ministers, whom he has himself reduced to the level of automata and will-less mamelukes, Napoleon dismisses the council and takes the Arch-Chancellor into his private room. "It was really not worth while consulting those gentlemen. You see what sort of advice one may expect from them! But you will hardly suppose that I had not made up my own mind before troubling to ask them. The Duke of Rovigo is to be Minister of Police." That evening, without giving Savary a chance to say whether he would like to accept the ticklish job of succeeding Fouché or not, the Emperor greets him with the brusque words: "You are Minister of Police. Take the oath and get to work."

Fouché's dismissal instantly becomes a topic of general discussion, and the current of public opinion sets strongly in his favour. Never has this double-faced minister acquired so much sympathy as by the stand he has just been making against the unrestricted autocracy es-

tablished by a man whose power was born out of the revolution and whose dictatorial ways are becoming intolerable to a generation of Frenchmen nurtured upon the idea of liberty. Apart from this general principle, no one is willing to admit that it was a punishable offence to run counter to the will of a war-maniac by trying to promote the long overdue understanding with England. All parties alike, royalists, republicans, and Jacobins, in conjunction with the foreign ambassadors and envoys, deplore in the fall of the last of the independent-minded ministers of State the manifest defeat of the peace movement. Even in his own palace, in his own bedroom, the Emperor is troubled by the presence of an advocate for the discharged servant, inasmuch as Marie Louise espouses Fouché's cause, just as Josephine had done in former days. She expresses her surprise that her husband should have removed from her entourage the one person whom, when writing to her father the Emperor of Austria, she has described as trustworthy. Nothing could bear plainer witness to the real mood of France at that date than that a man's prestige could thus be raised by his getting into Napoleon's bad books; and Fouché's successor describes the overwhelming effect of his predecessor's dismissal in the following pithy words: "I doubt if the news of the outbreak of a pestilence would have caused more consternation than did that of my appointment as Minister of Police." Unquestionably he has grown strong concomitantly with the Emperor during these ten years, has Monsieur Joseph Fouché.

In one way or another, Napoleon must have got wind of the trend of popular feeling, for, after using the iron hand, he promptly endeavours to mitigate the effects of the blow. When the dismissal has taken place, it is gilded, just as it had been in 1802, and is represented as a transfer to a new post. For the loss of the Ministry of Police, the Duke of Otranto is compensated by being made a privy councillor, and he is appointed to Rome as ambassador. The mingling of fear and anger, of reproachfulness and gratitude, of exasperation and a desire to conciliate, in the Emperor's mood is plainly shown in a farewell missive intended only for Fouché's private edification. It runs as follows: "Monsieur le duc d'Otrante, I know all the services you have done me, and I believe both in your attachment to my person and in your zeal for my service; nevertheless I find it impossible, without injustice to myself, to leave you your portfolio. The post of Minister of Police must be held by one in whom I have absolute confidence, and this confidence can no longer exist now that, in matters of outstanding importance, you have compromised my own tranquillity and that of the State in a way which not even the excellence of your motives can excuse. Your peculiar views concerning the duties of a Minister of Police are incompatible with the welfare of the State. Although I do not doubt your attachment and your loyalty, I find it necessary to keep you under constant observation in a way which fatigues me and which I cannot be expected to continue. You make it incumbent on me to watch you closely because you do so many things on

your own initiative, without knowing whether they harmonize with my wishes and my plans. . . . It is useless to hope that there will be any change in your behaviour, since, during a good many years, striking instances and repeated evidence of my displeasure have not worked any change. Being yourself convinced of the purity of your intentions, you seem unable to realize that a man can do a great deal of mischief when he designs to do a great deal of good. Still, my trust in your talents and your fidelity is unshaken. I hope to find opportunities of proving this confidence, and of turning these talents to account for my service." The letter is a clue to Napoleon's innermost feelings towards Joseph Fouché, and a second reading of the little masterpiece will repay the trouble, for it will show how sympathy and antipathy, liking and disliking, dread and secret respect, are jointly revealed in every sentence. The autocrat wants a slave, and is annoyed to discover a man of independent mind. He wants to rid himself of Fouché, but is afraid of making Fouché his enemy. He regrets losing this able servant, and is at the same time glad to be quit of one so dangerous.

But Napoleon's colossal growth in self-assurance is paralleled by Joseph Fouché's, and the general sympathy with him stiffens the latter's back yet more. It is not so light a matter as it might seem to dismiss the Duke of Otranto. Napoleon shall learn how the Ministry of Police is carried on when Fouché has been shown the door; as for Savary, he shall find that instead of getting

a comfortable ministerial post he has put his head into a hornets' nest. This admirably tuned instrument was not brought into being by ten years' hard work for a lout of an ex-army-man, a novice in the diplomatic world, to fool about with, that he might boast of as his own achievement what his predecessor had ripened in toilsome days and thoughtful nights. Things are not going to run so smoothly as the pair of them, Napoleon and Savary, imagine. They will find out that Joseph Fouché is not like the others, who always submissively bend their backs; but that he can show his teeth on occasion.

Fouché, in fact, has made up his mind not to take his dismissal lying down. He will not accept an imposed peace, will not capitulate without striking a blow. Of course he is not so foolish as to attempt open resistance; and, besides, that would be out of keeping with his temperament. But he will play off a joke, a merry little joke, which will show Savary that there are man-traps and spring-guns in the Duke of Otranto's domain. One who is studying Fouché's life must be continually reminded of the strange, puckishly demoniacal element in his character, thanks to which when he is most fiercely enraged he wants to play a prank upon the offender, and thanks to which his temper when it rises does not show itself as a royal rage but as a grotesquely humorous and nevertheless dangerous spite. He never strikes his enemy with the clenched fist, but with the fool's bauble; and always in such a way as to show the other to be really the fool. Whatever vestiges of instinctive passion there may be in this reserved and self-contained man

froth up violently at such times; and it is precisely when he seems so merry in his anger that we can best glimpse the daimonic fires within.

A merry jest to play off on his successor! That will be an easy matter to devise when one has to do with an unsuspecting blockhead. The Duke of Otranto therefore dons his full-dress uniform and assumes his most courteous manner to receive Savary when the latter comes to take charge. Overwhelming is the amiability he displays towards the dear Duke of Rovigo. Not only does the Duke of Otranto congratulate his colleague on being honoured by the Emperor's choice, but he declares himself delighted at being at length freed from an office of which he has grown weary because he has held it too long. What a pleasure it will be to rest for a time after such arduous labour. For in truth this office is an arduous one, and a thankless one, as Savary will soon learn for himself, especially as he is not accustomed to it. Of course, Fouché goes on, it will be a great pleasure to him to help his friend by setting things to rights as quickly as possible—the change has come rather suddenly, so naturally there are a few items to be put in perfect order. Some days may be needed, but, if the Duke of Rovigo agrees, Fouché will be only too glad to undertake this little service, this extra work, and meanwhile that will give the Duchess of Otranto more leisure for the housemoving. The worthy Savary, Duke of Rovigo, never dreams that there is pepper in the honey. He is pleased as well as astonished at the kindliness of the man who is usually stigmatized as malicious and designing, and he

thanks the Duke of Otranto most cordially. Certainly Fouché must stay for as many days as he thinks necessary. With a bow, the new incumbent departs, having first shaken this misunderstood and much-maligned man warmly by the hand.

What a pity that we cannot see Joseph Fouché's face as the door closes on his humbugged successor. "Does the fool actually believe I shall set things in order for him; that I shall leave behind me all the secrets I have so skilfully garnered during ten years of office, leave them carefully filed and docketed for him to con over and use for his own purposes? That I shall clean and oil the machinery for him, the machinery which I invented and brought to perfection, so that it noiselessly and invisibly extracts and elaborates information from the entire realm? Idiot! How he will stare when the 'few days' are over!"

A furious activity now begins in the private office. Having summoned a trusty friend to his aid, Fouché locks the door, and then the pair of them hastily remove all important papers from the files. Anything which might be of value to Savary, any document compromising persons over whom it will be useful to have a hold, is set aside to be taken away; the rest are burned forthwith. Why should Monsieur Savary be supplied with the names of those who have acted as spies for the Minister of Police in the fashionable quarter of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, in the army, and at court? That might make things too easy for him. Commit the lists to the flames. Leave him only the names of the lower-grade

talebearers and informers, the doorkeepers and prostitutes, from whom he can learn nothing of real moment. With frantic speed the portfolios are emptied. The precious lists of royalist émigrés and of private correspondents disappear. Everything is thrown into disorder: the general index is destroyed; documents are provided with wrong numbers; and the chief employees of the incoming minister are bribed to act simultaneously in the secret service of the retiring incumbent, to report regularly to the man who will remain their real master. Thus essential parts of the giant machine are removed, so that the cogs no longer interlock, with the result that it will refuse its task when the unsuspecting new-comer tries to make the wheels turn. As the Russians set fire to their holy city of Moscow when Napoleon enters it, that the place may become uninhabitable for him and his army, so Fouché destroys his own beloved life-work. Four days and four nights are spent in this way, and all the time the flames are roaring up the chimney. Not a soul has any suspicion while these wonderful secrets are being reduced to ashes, or the evidence of them being removed to Fouché's private house at Ferrières.

Then one more polite interview with the successor, an interview wherein Fouché outdoes himself in amiability. So glad to see you! Won't you sit down and make yourself at home? A warm handclasp, and fervent thanks from poor Savary. Now the Duke of Otranto ought to set out for Rome instanter, to take over the duties of the embassy. Instead he goes to Ferrières, and waits there, trembling with impatience, ears cocked for the

first cry of rage when his successor shall discover the trick played him by Joseph Fouché.

A merry jest, carefully planned and boldly executed! But Fouché has overlooked one point when carrying out this cheerful mystification. He has behaved as if he had only to deal with his inexperienced, half-baked successor the Duke of Rovigo, a callow nestling of a minister. He has forgotten that behind Savary stands Napoleon, a man who does not allow anyone to make a fool of him. In any case, the Emperor has his eye on Fouché, has been wondering why there has been so much delay in handing over the reins of office, and why the new ambassador is at Ferrières instead of on his way to Rome. Furthermore during the examination of Ouvrard it has transpired that once before, through another intermediary, Fouché had sent notes to the British cabinet. No one hitherto has thus humbugged Napoleon with impunity. He sends a sharply worded letter to Ferrières, a letter as abrupt as the crack of a whip: "Monsieur le duc d'Otrante, please let me have the note you had from Mr. Fagan whom you sent to London to sound Lord Wellesley, and who brought you back an answer from the said Lord—an answer which has never been made known to me." This harsh trumpet-tone might wake the dead. But Fouché, arrogant, crazily self-confident, is in no hurry to reply. Meanwhile at the Tuileries the fat is in the fire. Savary, having discovered the plundering of the archives at his office, has reported the matter to the Emperor. Immediately a second letter comes to

Fouché, and then a third, demanding the immediate surrender of "all the ministerial documents." Next, the secretary to the cabinet comes in person to Ferrières, charged to take over from the Duke of Otranto the papers which the latter has illegally removed from the Ministry of the Police. The farce is over, and the serious struggle has begun.

The farce is over, and really Fouché ought to be aware of this. But, as if he were ridden by the devil, he would seem to have determined to measure his strength against that of Napoleon, the strongest man in the world. In defiance of the truth, he tells the messenger that, much to his regret, he has no documents. He has burned them all. Naturally no one believes this of Fouché, and least of all Napoleon. A second warning is sent, harsher and more menacing, for patience is not one of the Emperor's virtues. But now heedlessness grows to stubbornness, stubbornness to impudence, impudence to defiance. Fouché reiterates that he has no documents, and justifies his destruction of His Majesty's private papers in true blackmailer style. So great had been His Majesty's trust in him, he says mockingly, that whenever one of His Majesty's brothers had incurred His Majesty's displeasure, he, Fouché, had been commissioned to recall the offender to proper courses. But since, at such times, every one of the brothers had ventilated his grievances in writing to Fouché, Fouché had thought it inexpedient to preserve said letters. Also, His Majesty's sisters had not invariably been exempt from calumny, and the Em-

peror had instructed him to collect and transmit all such scandalous reports, and to inquire what indiscretions might have given rise to them. Plainer and plainer! Fouché is giving the Emperor to understand that he knows too much, and that he is not going to put up with being treated as if he were a lackey. The messenger is aware that he is listening to a veiled threat, and must have found it hard to dress up the bold answer in presentable form. Now Napoleon's wrath exceeds all bounds. He rages and storms so violently that the Duke of Massa tries to pacify him, and, in the hope of removing the cause of the trouble, volunteers to visit the refractory Fouché and endeavour to secure the return of the purloined documents. An additional attempt is made by the Duke of Rovigo. Yet to one and all Fouché returns the same courteous answer. He is very, very sorry; perhaps he erred by excess of caution, but all the papers have been burned. For the first time in France a man is openly defying the Emperor.

This is past bearing! For ten years, no doubt, Napoleon has underestimated Fouché; but Fouché underestimates Napoleon in fancying him to be a man who can be intimidated by the threat of disclosing a few of his relatives' indiscretions. To defy him before all his ministers, a man before whom all the German and Italian monarchs tremble like schoolboys before the master; a man whom all the armies of Europe have been unable to withstand: and now this pallid mummy, this arid in-

triguer in a new ducal mantle, dares to disobey him! No one shall treat Napoleon thus with impunity. Summoning Dubois, chief of the private police, he bursts forth into furious invectives against the "wretched creature" Fouché. Striding up and down the room, the Emperor declaims: "He need not count on being able to treat me as he treated his God, his Convention, and his Directory, basely betraying them and selling them! I can see farther than Barras could, and he will not find it so easy with me. Let him take warning, then. He has some notes, some instructions of mine, and I mean him to return them. If he refuses, if he refuses, send along ten gendarmes immediately to take him to the Abbaye prison, and then, by God, I will show him how quickly a trial can be put through."

The flames are growing fiercer, so that even Fouché finds that his nose is being scorched. When Dubois arrives, the sometime Minister of Police, the Duke of Otranto, has to submit to having all his documents put under seal by this man who was so recently one of his underlings. It might be inconvenient—not to say dangerous—had not the wily fox been prepared, so that everything that mattered had been put out of harm's way many days before. Still, it begins to dawn on him that he is running his head against a wall. In haste he sends letter after letter, one to Napoleon and the others to the ministers of State, complaining bitterly that the Emperor should have so little confidence in him, the most honest, the most upright, the most high-principled, the most devoted of all His Majesty's servants. In one of

these epistles the reader who knows his Fouché delights to discover the following words, which were actually penned of himself by this human chameleon: "Il n'est pas de mon caractère de changer." Just as fifteen years before with Robespierre so now with the Emperor, he still hopes to avert disaster by a speedy though belated reconciliation. He drives back to Paris, to explain matters to the Emperor in a personal interview, or perhaps to make his apologies.

It is too late. He has carried the game too far, has enjoyed his joke too long. There can be no reconciliation now, nor any compromise. One who has publicly defied Napoleon, must be publicly humiliated. The Emperor will not see him, but sends him a letter more harshly worded and more cutting than perhaps any other which this dictatorial ruler ever sent to one of his ministers. It is very short, this letter, this kick of contemptuous dismissal: "Monsieur le duc d'Otrante, your services can no longer be congenial to me. You must leave for your senatorship within twenty-four hours." Not a word more about the embassy to Rome: a blunt discharge from public office; and banishment. At the same time the Minister of Police is instructed to see to it that the edict is promptly enforced.

The tension has been too great, the hazard too desperate, for now an unexpected thing happens. Fouché crumples up. He is like a sleepwalker who has been climbing heedlessly from roof to roof, but when wakened by a shout is paralysed with fear at the danger of his position,

and, unnerved by terror, falls headlong to the ground. The very man who had retained his self-command and his capacity for clear thinking when in imminent peril of the guillotine, collapses pitifully under this blow from Napoleon.

The third of June, 1810, is Joseph Fouché's Waterloo. Trembling with alarm, he hastens to secure a passport, and speeds post-haste to Italy. There, like a panic-stricken rat in a burning house, he runs aimlessly hither and thither. Now he is in Parma, now in Florence, now in Pisa, now in Leghorn; going anywhere and everywhere instead of, as ordered, to his senatorship of Aix. Anywhere to get out of Napoleon's realm, anywhere out of reach of that terrible grip! Even Italy seems to him unsafe, for it is still in Europe, and all Europe is subject to this dread being. In Leghorn, therefore, he charters a ship to take him to America, the land of safety, the land of freedom. But soon he is driven back by stormy weather, sea-sickness, and the fear of British cruisers. Taking to the post-chaise once more, he drives from seaport to seaport, and from one inland town to another; begs Napoleon's sisters to intercede for him; appeals to some of the ruling princes; implores his friends to help him; vanishes and turns up once more in a way that greatly annoys the police spies who are instructed to keep watch on him and are continually losing his trail—in a word, he behaves like a wandering lunatic, beside himself with anxiety, he, the man with iron nerves, presenting for the first time in his life the picture of complete nervous collapse. Never before had Napoleon with

a single gesture, with a mere blow of the fist, so completely crushed an opponent as he crushed this boldest and most cold-blooded of his servants.

His appearances and disappearances, his delirious wanderings from place to place, went on for weeks, and it is impossible to discover what he really hoped to effect by them. Madelin, the best-informed of his biographers, does not know; and it is probable that Fouché himself did not know. We can only suppose that in his post-chaise he felt safer from the wrath of the Emperor, who, presumably, as soon as Fouché was out of sight, had dismissed from his mind the thought of taking extreme measures against this unruly servant. All Napoleon had wanted was to enforce his own will, to get back his own papers—and in this matter he has his way. For while Fouché, hysterical with fear, was driving madly along the post-roads of Italy, his wife in Paris was behaving far more sensibly. She capitulated on his behalf. There can be no doubt that the Duchess of Otranto, in order to save her husband, discreetly restored to Napoleon the papers which had mischievously been withheld, for not one of the private documents of which Fouché had threatened to make a blackmailer's use was ever published. We know that the Emperor bought up certain compromising papers from Barras and from others who were inconveniently familiar with the circumstances of his rise to power. In like manner, all the papers Fouché had collected bearing on Napoleon vanished without leaving a trace. If Napoleon did not himself destroy them, the destruction must have been the work of Na-

poleon III, who, as far as he was able, made a clean sweep of all written evidence which conflicted with the official Napoleonic legend.

At length, then, thanks to his wife's intervention, Fouché is graciously permitted to betake himself to his senatorship of Aix. The storm has blown itself out, and though the lightning had completely unnerved him for a time, the core of his being is uninjured. On September 25th the hunted man gets back to his estate, "pale, worn, and showing, by the incoherence of his ideas and the disorder of his speech, how profoundly he has been shaken." But he will have plenty of time in which to recuperate, for one who has set up his will against Napoleon's must not for a good while have another chance of playing a part in public affairs. He must pay for his little joke. Once more the waves have washed him into the abyss. For three years Joseph Fouché holds no office. His third exile has begun.

CHAPTER SEVEN

AN INVOLUNTARY INTERLUDE

1810–1815

Joseph Fouché's third exile has begun. The ex-minister of State, the Duke of Otranto, lives like a sovereign prince at his fine castle at Aix. He is now two-and-fifty years of age. He has drunk life to the lees; has experienced all the tensions and amusements, all the successes and contrarieties, of a political career; has known the eternal change between ebb and flow in the tide of destiny. He has experienced the favour of the mighty and the despair of being forsaken; he has been so poor as to be doubtful whether he could get a crust for to-morrow's dinner, and he has been immoderately rich; he has been loved and hated, courted and despised. Now at length he can rest on the golden shore, for he is a duke, a senator, His Excellency, retired minister of State, privy councillor, multi-millionaire, subject only to his own will. He can drive comfortably in his fine carriage, can visit noble houses, can receive homage from the people of his province, and can listen to whispers of secret sympathy from Paris. He is freed from the daily plague of having to find brains for brainless underlings, and of having to accommodate himself to the whims of a des-

potic master. If we were to believe the evidence of his contented demeanour, we should suppose that the Duke of Otranto is relieved at having shaken off the burden of affairs. But that we should be deceiving ourselves is shown by the following unquestionably genuine passage in his otherwise extremely untrustworthy memoirs: * "It had become second nature to me to know about everything that was going on, and I suffered still more from this craving amid the boredom of a very pleasant but monotonous exile." He tells us, moreover, that if his exile was, after all, charming, this was not because he dwelt amid the pleasant landscapes of Provence, but because, even there, he was the centre of a network of secret reports from the metropolis. "With the aid of trusty friends and three faithful messengers, I carried on a secret correspondence, supplemented by regular reports from various sources. . . . In a word, I had my own private police in Aix." What he can no longer do as an officer in the public service, the unresting man now does for his own amusement. Since he is forbidden to enter the ministerial offices, he delights, through others' eyes, to peep through the keyholes, by means of others' ears to eavesdrop at the conversations, on the watch all the

* In the present work I have made very little use of the *Mémoires de Joseph Fouché Duc d'Otrante*, published in Paris in the year 1824, more than three years after Fouché's death, for they were certainly got together by another hand though to some extent from authentic material. To what degree the eternal deceiver was himself concerned in their preparation is still open to dispute, and, pending further inquiries, we can accept the quip of Heinrich Heine, who, writing of Fouché as a master of falsehood, said: "He carried his falseness to such a pitch as to publish false memoirs after his death."

while to learn whether an opportunity may not arise for offering his services once more, for forcing his way to a seat at the gaming-table of history.

But he will have to keep his hands out of the game for a long time yet, for Napoleon has no need of him. The Emperor stands at the climax of his power: he has conquered Europe; he is son-in-law of the Emperor of Austria; and (the fulfilment of the greatest of his wishes) he is a father, the father of the King of Rome. The German and Italian princes fawn upon him, cringe before him, are thankful to him for graciously allowing them to continue to wear their crowns. Even England, the only one of his enemies to keep the field, is now hesitant. The man has become so strong that he has no need for the services of so untrustworthy an assistant as Joseph Fouché; and Fouché, now that he has abundant time to think things over, may well perceive how presumptuous it was of him to measure forces against the mightiest man in the world. The Emperor does not even condescend to hate the fallen Duke of Otranto. From the immense altitude to which he has climbed, he scarcely sees the troublesome little insects which used to nest in his ermine robe and which he has testily shaken forth from it. He pays no heed to Fouché's importunity, and does not even mark the man's absence. For him, Fouché has been wiped off the slate. Nothing can give plainer proof to the ex-minister of Napoleon's contempt for him, than that he is at length permitted to return to his country house at Ferrières, less than two hours' drive from Paris. Thus far and no farther, however. The Emperor still

forbids Paris and the Tuileries to the servant who had dared to defy him.

Once only during these two empty years is Joseph Fouché summoned to the palace. Napoleon is preparing to make war on Russia. This one time, since all other counsellors are opposed to the step, Fouché shall be asked his opinion. If we are to believe Fouché, he uttered urgent warnings, and actually embodied them in the memorandum (which may, of course, have been concocted long after the event) to be found in his memoirs. But for years, now, when Napoleon asks advice it is only that he may hear what he wants to hear, may have his own opinion confirmed. One who advises him against war seems to doubt his greatness. Fouché, therefore, is coldly dismissed, sent back to his tedious exile at Ferrières, while the Emperor, having raised an army of six hundred thousand men, sets forth upon the boldest and the craziest of his undertakings—the march to Moscow.

The strange and changeful life of Joseph Fouché is characterized by a peculiar rhythm. When he is on the up grade, he succeeds in whatever he attempts; when he is on the down grade, destiny frowns upon him. Now that, sorrowful and embittered, in the shadow of disfavour, he must remain inactive and outside the movement of events, now, of all times, when he needs spiritual help in his disappointment, needs friendly converse, gentle consolation—now, of all times, he loses his wife, who has been his faithful and loving companion for

twenty years, standing beside him on his dangerous courses. During his first exile, in the garret room, the two eldest of their children had died, the two whom he had loved more than all the others. During the third exile, his dear companion leaves him. Impassive though he seems, this loss cuts him to the quick. Faithless and capricious in his attitude towards all parties and all ideals, the inscrutable man was exquisitely tender towards his ugly wife, was the most attentive of husbands, the kindest of fathers. Just as behind the mask of the arid man of the study there lurks the intriguer who is fond of playing grim jests, so deep within this formidable and untrustworthy soul there continues to exist a faithful husband of the French provincial middle-class, a man with a taste for his own fireside, one who feels safest and most contented in the bosom of his family. This retired domestic existence had always been a relief from and a counterpoise to the unsettlement, the risks, and the mutations of his political career, and it had been a haven of retreat during the times when his political career was interrupted. Now he was deprived of it just when he needed it most. For the first time there becomes obvious in this cold personality an uprush of genuine feeling; for the first time we can discern in his letters a tone of cordial and genuinely human sensibility. When his friends urge him to exert himself to obtain once more the portfolio of the Minister of Police, seeing that his successor, the Duke of Rovigo, has made himself the laughing-stock of Paris in his dealings with a ridiculous attempt at a rising on the part of a semi-imbecile, Fouché

renounces any idea of returning to political life. "My heart is closed to all human follies. Power no longer has any charms for me. Repose is not merely suitable to my present situation, but is necessary to me. Public affairs present to me nothing but a picture of tumult, vexation, and danger." For the first time, lessoned by fate, the clever man seems to have become truly clever. Now that he is beginning to grow old, now that he has lost his beloved companion, his inordinate ambition has given place to a profound longing for rest, for a lasting relief from tension. The delight in intrigue seems to have vanished, the will to power to have been broken, in this spirit which had for decades been unceasingly driven onward by both.

But at this juncture the irony of fate manifests itself. The first time, the only time, when the usually restless and ambitious Fouché craves for repose and does not desire office, his adversary Napoleon forces work and office upon him.

It is not by love, not by inclination, not by a revival of confidence, that Napoleon is induced to take Fouché once more into his service, but by the extreme insecurity of his own position. The Emperor has come back to Paris a defeated man. Not now does he ride proudly through the Arc de Triomphe at the head of his troops with drums beating and banners flying; he enters his capital secretly by night, muffled up to the chin to avoid recognition. The finest army he has ever commanded has been destroyed in Russia; the bodies of his men lie frozen in the snow; and, since he is no longer in-

vincible, his friends are deserting him. All the other rulers who but yesterday bent before him in reverence have of a sudden remembered their own dignity in face of this conquered Emperor. A world has risen up in arms against its harsh master. From Russia, the Cossacks are riding towards France; from Sweden, Napoleon's old rival Bernadotte is coming as an enemy; Emperor Francis, his father-in-law, is equipping himself in Bohemia; the plundered and enslaved Prussians are making ready for revenge. In countless wars, this man has sown the dragon's teeth, and now armed men bent on his extermination are springing everywhere from the ravaged soil of Europe. The harvest will be reaped this autumn on the plains of Leipzig. The gigantic edifice he has erected and maintained singlehanded during these last ten years is rocking and cracking on all its fronts. His brothers, hunted from their thrones, are fleeing from Spain, Westphalia, Holland, and Italy. It behoves Napoleon to display his utmost energy. With splendid clairvoyance, with tenfold intensified powers of work, he makes ready for a decisive struggle. Anyone left in France able to carry a knapsack or sit a horse is levied for military service. The veterans are called from Spain and Italy to make good the losses inflicted in Russia by "General Winter." The factories are at work night and day making swords and cannons. Gold coins are minted out of the hidden treasures; the savings stored in the Tuileries are put into circulation; all the fortresses are hastily repaired: and, while from the east and from the west the combatant armies are marching on Leipzig,

the weapons of diplomacy are also busily at work. Every weak spot must be safeguarded; there must be no gaps in the encirclement that is to defend France; every possibility must be foreseen, and the rear must be protected no less adequately than the front. There must be no repetition of what happened during the Russian campaign; it must not remain possible for a fool or an ill-wisher to undermine people's confidence in Napoleon. The untrustworthy must come with him to the front; the dangerous must be kept under close observation.

In his preparations for this struggle, the Emperor takes into account all the elements of power, and thinks of every possible risk. Naturally, therefore, he does not forget a man who might prove dangerous; he does not forget Joseph Fouché. We see that Napoleon has never forgotten Fouché, but has only despised him as long as he himself was still strong. Now, when the foundations of his power are trembling, he must do all that he can to secure them. No possible enemy must be left to work mischief at his back; not one of them must stay in Paris. Since, therefore, the Emperor does not reckon Fouché among his friends, he decides that Fouché must be removed from Paris.

To arrest him and confine him in a fortress would be the best way of preventing this untiring intriguer from spinning his webs, but unfortunately there is no plausible pretext for such a step. Still, he must not on any account be left free to do whatever he pleases. The best way out of the difficulty, therefore, will be to tie his hands by giving him a post of some kind, preferably

one which will take him far from Paris. At the headquarters in Dresden, amid all the tumult of affairs and busied in war-like preparations, the Emperor finds it difficult to discover such a post for Fouché, one which will seem honourable and will at the same time keep the man safely occupied. Yet Napoleon is impatient to get this puller of secret strings away from the metropolis. Since no extant post is available, a new one is invented. The Duke of Otranto is assigned to an office in Cloud-cuckooland; he is appointed administrator of the occupied areas in Prussia. Unquestionably this is an extremely dignified position, the only drawback being that his regency cannot begin until Napoleon has conquered Prussia. The happenings in the field of war do not give much prospect of anything of the kind, for Blücher is pressing the Emperor hard on his Saxon flank, and there is therefore something farcical about the letter which Napoleon writes to Fouché under date of May 10th: "I told you that it was my purpose, as soon as I should occupy the domains of the King of Prussia, to summon you to me, and to make you the head of the government of that country. Not a word about this must transpire in Paris. It must seem as if you were betaking yourself to your rural retreat, whereas in reality you will already be here, although people believe you to be at home. No one but the Empress is informed about your departure. I welcome the opportunity of receiving from you ere long new services and new proofs of your devotion." Thus writes the Emperor, precisely because he has no confidence in Joseph Fouché's "devotion." The Duke of

Otranto, likewise, penetrating his master's design, is reluctant and suspicious as he makes his way to Dresden. "It was at once clear to me," he writes in his memoirs, "that when the Emperor summoned me to Dresden it was only because he was afraid to leave me in Paris, and wanted me as a hostage." The future regent of Prussia, therefore, takes his time on the way to join the Council of State in Dresden. He does not arrive until May 29th, and the first words with which the Emperor greets him are: "You come late, Monsieur le Duc."

In Dresden, nothing more is said as to the comic-opera appointment to the regency of Prussia. Matters have become too serious for such jesting. The great thing is that the Emperor now has Fouché in safe-keeping, and, as luck would have it, at this moment another vacancy offers, one well-suited to remove Fouché to an even greater distance from the centre of things. It is not, like the famous regency of Prussia, in Cloudcuckooland or in the moon, but at any rate it is hundreds of miles from Paris, being a real regency this time, the regency of Illyria. The governor of the province, Napoleon's old companion-in-arms General Junot, has lost his reason. Here is a niche into which the unruly servant can be thrust. With scarcely veiled irony, therefore, the Emperor, confers this dominion upon the Duke of Otranto, who, as usual, raises no objection, but bows humbly, and expresses his readiness to leave for the south instantly.

Illyria—this name, too, smacks of the stage. It is, indeed, a queer patchwork of a State which has been pieced

together out of rags torn from Friuli, Carinthia, Dalmatia, Istria, and Triest! A State without any unifying idea, without meaning or purpose, having the little country town of Laibach as capital, not a viable creature at all, but a sort of hermaphrodite monster, engendered by intoxicated autocracy and blind diplomacy. All that Fouché finds there is an almost empty treasury, a few dozen bored officials, a scanty force of soldiers, and a disaffected populace, only awaiting the withdrawal of the French. Everywhere the timbers of the jerrybuilt edifice are cracking. A couple of cannon shots, and the whole structure will fall to pieces. Emperor Francis soon fires these cannon shots, directed against his son-in-law Emperor Napoleon, and the brief glories of the State of Illyria are at an end. Fouché cannot dream of serious resistance, having only two or three regiments at his disposal, mostly made up of Croats, ready at the first moment of conflict to go over to their old comrades. From the outset, therefore, he is engaged in preparations for retreat; but in order to mask these he exhibits the firm demeanour of an unconcerned ruler, gives balls and parties, and holds reviews of his troops, while night after night what funds there are and the governmental documents are being secretly transferred to Triest. He has no option, as lord and master of this ridiculous country, than cautiously, step by step, and with the least possible sacrifices, to evacuate it; and in this strategic movement to the rear he shows his old coolness, energy, and quickness of grasp. Step by step, therefore, without losses, he withdraws from Laibach to Görz, from Görz

to Triest, from Triest to Venice, bringing away intact, or almost intact, from the short-lived Illyria its officials, its funds, and much valuable material. But of what account is the loss of an absurd province? In these very days, Napoleon loses the most important and the last great contest of this war, is defeated in the Battle of the Nations at Leipzig, and thus forfeits the hegemony of the world.

Fouché has performed his task, and has done so most honourably, most effectively. Now, since there no longer exists an Illyria to rule, he feels at liberty to return to Paris. But Napoleon has no intention of allowing him to do anything of the kind. In Dresden the Emperor had said: "Fouché is a man, who, in existing circumstances, must on no account be left in Paris." This is more than ever true after the defeat at Leipzig. At all hazards, Fouché must be kept away from the capital. Amid the titanic work of resisting the advance of forces outnumbering his by five to one, Napoleon finds time to assign him another mission, which will render him harmless throughout the remainder of the campaign. Let him have some sort of diplomatic job, some kind of intrigue to carry on, for that will keep his restless fingers from working mischief in Paris! The Emperor therefore commissions him to go first to Naples—Naples is a long way off!—in order to see whether he can persuade Murat (King of Naples and Napoleon's brother-in-law, who is more concerned about the safety of his own kingdom than about that of the Empire) to help with an army.

How Fouché carried out this mission, whether he really tried to persuade the sometime dashing cavalry general to be faithful to his salt, or on the other hand secretly encouraged him in his recusancy, is a point which has never been cleared up. In any case, the Emperor's main purpose is achieved. For four months, Fouché is kept on the farther side of the Alps, a thousand miles from the French capital, busied in continuous negotiations. While the Austrians, the Prussians, and the British are marching on Paris, he has to drive to and fro on what are really purposeless errands between Rome and Florence and Naples, between Lucca and Genoa, squandering time and energy upon an insoluble problem. For here in the south, likewise, the Austrians are advancing irresistibly. The loss of Illyria is speedily followed by that of Italy, the second realm assigned to Fouché's guardianship. At length, by the beginning of March, Emperor Napoleon has no longer any territory outside of France whither he can dispatch this inconvenient servant; and even within the boundaries of France he has ceased to be in a position to enforce his will. On March 11th, therefore, Joseph Fouché crosses the Alps on his way home, having by the Emperor's foresight been prevented during four irrecoverable months from carrying on any political intrigue on French soil. When at length he breaks his chain, it is four days too late.

On reaching Lyons, Fouché learns that the allied troops are marching on Paris. In a few days, Napoleon will be overthrown, and a new government will be

formed. Naturally Fouché burns with impatience to have a finger in the pie, and to pick out the fattest plums for himself. But the direct route to Paris is already barred by the enemy troops, so that he has to make an immense detour by way of Toulouse and Limoges. At length, on April 8th, his post-chaise drives through the gates of Paris. At the first glance, he realizes that he has come too late; and he knows that the late-comer is in the wrong. Napoleon has paid him out for his secret disloyalties and mischievous tricks by keeping him away from the centre of things so long as there was still a possibility of fishing in the troubled waters. Paris has already capitulated; Napoleon has abdicated; Louis XVIII is king in actual fact, and all the members of the new government have been appointed under Talleyrand's leadership. This accursed cripple was on the spot, and was able to change his coat more quickly than Fouché could in the circumstances. Tsar Alexander is a guest in Talleyrand's house; the new king is overwhelming Talleyrand with proofs of confidence; Talleyrand has filled all the ministerial offices in accordance with his own liking, and has basely omitted to reserve one for the Duke of Otranto. No one has been waiting for him, no one is bothering about him, no one wants anything from him, no one asks him for advice and help. Once again, Joseph Fouché is, as so often before, a man settled and done with.

For a long time he finds it difficult to believe that people regard him with so much indifference, him, the great adversary of Napoleon. He offers himself, both in pub-

lic and in private. He is to be seen in Talleyrand's anteroom, visiting the King's brother, calling on the English ambassador, lobbying in the Senate—everywhere. But no one will listen to him. No one will listen to him. He writes letter after letter; one of them to Napoleon, whom he advises to emigrate to the United States—and at the same time he sends a copy of this letter to King Louis XVIII, hoping to ingratiate himself in that quarter. There is no answer. He begs the ministers to appoint him to a suitable post. They receive him politely but coldly, and give him no encouragement. He gets ladies of influence to recommend him, and tries to exercise a pull through the instrumentality of former protégés; but all in vain, for he has made a mistake which in politics is unpardonable—he has come too late. The places are filled, and not one of the occupants shows himself inclined to resign in order to make a vacancy for the Duke of Otranto. His ambition being thus baffled, there is nothing left for the poor man to do but to repack his trunk and betake himself to his country house at Ferrières. Now that his wife is dead, he has only one helper left—time. Time has always helped him hitherto, and will help him again on this occasion.

Yes, time helps him once more. His nose is as keen as ever, and it is not long before he smells powder in the air. Nor is his hearing less acute than of old, and even from Ferrières the ominous crackling of the throne reaches his ears. The new ruler, Louis XVIII, makes mistake after mistake. It is his fancy to ignore the revo-

lution, to forget that after two decades of citizenship France will be disinclined to bow reverently before twenty generations of nobility. He fails to recognize, too, how dangerous to his tenure of the throne is the Prætorian guild of military officers, who, put on half-pay, are extremely discontented with the new king's stinginess. If only Napoleon were back, they think (and some of them mutter it to one another), we should have the glorious days of war once more. We should be able to go on ravaging and plundering, could make careers for ourselves, could take up the reins again! Trusty messengers are being dispatched from one garrison town to another; a conspiracy is being hatched in the army; and Fouché, who has never wholly severed the ties between himself and his own creation, the police, hears many things which give him cause for thought. He smiles as he says to himself: "Our worthy King would have heard about all this had he thought fit to appoint the Duke of Otranto as Minister of Police." But why should Fouché drop a hint to the court flunkeys? Always, hitherto, it has been revolution, a sudden storm, which has brought him to the top. He keeps his own counsel, therefore, does not lift a finger, but holds his breath like a wrestler before a moment of supreme exertion.

On March 5, 1815, a panting dispatch-rider enters the Tuileries with the news that Napoleon has left Elba and with six hundred men has landed at Fréjus on March 1st. Six hundred men? How absurd! Does the fool think that with such a force he can fight King Louis,

who has a great army, and is backed up by the whole of Europe? No need to worry; a handful of gendarmes will settle the account of this pitiful adventurer. Marshal Ney, Napoleon's old companion-in-arms, is ordered to deal with the matter. Grandiloquently he promises the King, not merely to capture this disturber of the peace, but to bring the Corsican to Paris in an iron cage. For the first week, Louis XVIII and his trusty adherents parade their unconcern before the eyes of the Parisians, and the "Moniteur" treats the affair as a joke. Then an ominous report comes to hand. Except for the repulse of his overtures to the officers and garrison at Antibes, Napoleon has nowhere encountered any resistance; the soldiers sent against him have joined him, thus swelling his little army; even Marshal Ney, forgetting his boast, deserts King Louis to enter the service of his old master. Napoleon is at Grenoble, he is in Lyons, a week later and his prophecy is fulfilled, for the imperial eagle alights once more upon the towers of Notre Dame.

Panic has broken out in the royal court. What is to be done? How can the progress of this avalanche be stayed? Too late do the King and his noble advisers recognize how foolish they have been to estrange the people, to forget that between 1792 and 1815 there had been a revolution in France. Well, the only thing to do now is to make themselves popular as quickly as possible! Somehow or other the King must show the stupid common folk that he truly loves them, that he respects their wishes and their rights, that he will rule in a republican and democratic fashion. Thus always when it is too late

do emperors and kings discover that they have democratic hearts. But how are the republicans to be won over? That, surely, will be simple enough. Incorporate one of them into the ministry, a thorough-going radical, who will give the fleur-de-lis a fine coat of red paint! Where can we find the man we want? Name after name comes up for discussion, until at length someone speaks of a certain Joseph Fouché who only a few weeks back had been so pertinacious a visitor in the ministerial waiting-rooms, wearying them with his proposals, and burdening His Majesty's table with letters. He will be the very man, ready for anything and everything, so hale him forth at once from his obscurity. Always when a government is in difficulties, whether it be the Directory, the Consulate, the Empire, or the Monarchy; always when a go-between, a compromiser, a restorer of order, is needed—people appeal to the man with the red flag, to that most untrustworthy character and most trustworthy of diplomatists, Joseph Fouché.

Thus the Duke of Otranto has the satisfaction of finding that the very same counts and princes who a few weeks earlier were turning him the cold shoulder, now apply to him with the utmost respect, offer him a portfolio, wish to press him warmly by the hand. But the sometime Minister of Police is far too well-informed concerning the political situation to commit himself to the Bourbons at this thirteenth hour. He is sure that the death-rattle must already be in the patient's throat if Dr. Fouché is summoned to the bedside in such haste. Under one pretext or another, therefore, he courteously

refuses these overtures, with the gentle implication that they come rather late in the day. But the nearer Napoleon's troops draw to Paris, the more completely does the royal court lose its sense of dignity. More and more importunately is Fouché urged to take over the government, and even the King's own brother invites him to a private conversation. This time, however, Fouché sticks to his guns—not from any unexpected firmness of conviction, but because he is not inclined to buy stinking fish, and because he finds it an extremely agreeable sensation to be on the see-saw between Louis XVIII and Napoleon. He therefore tells Brother Charles not to be uneasy, that King Louis's best course will be to seek out a safe haven of refuge, that this last Napoleonic adventure will not be of long duration, and that while it is in progress he himself will do all he can to thwart the Emperor. They need only trust in him. Thus he arranges to keep in the Bourbons' good books, so that if they should after all get the upper hand he may pose as one of their helpers. On the other hand, should Napoleon conquer, Fouché will be able to point proudly to the fact that he refused the King's advances. He has so often found it useful to have a foot in both camps that he inevitably has recourse to the same plan on this occasion. He will simultaneously be the loyal servant of two masters, the Emperor and the King.

But this time his tactics are to have an amusing upshot, even more amusing than is customary, though always in the decisive moments of Fouché's career tragedy

inclines to assume the comic mask. One thing, at least, the Bourbons have learned from Napoleon, and that is that in dangerous times it is unwise to leave such a man as Fouché in a position from which he can stab them in the back. Thus it is that, only two days before the King's departure from Paris, when Napoleon is already close to the capital, the police are instructed, since Fouché refuses to become the King's minister, to arrest him as a suspicious character and deport him from Paris.

History loves quaint and surprising conjunctures. The Minister of Police entrusted with carrying out this disagreeable arrest is, if you please, Bourrienne. He had been Bonaparte's most intimate friend in youth, his comrade in the Military Academy, his companion in Egypt; he had for many years been the Emperor's secretary; he had known all Napoleon's associates, and he is therefore extremely well acquainted with Fouché. Naturally he is a little alarmed when King Louis commands him to arrest the Duke of Otranto. He ventures to express a doubt whether such a step is expedient. When the King reiterates the order, Bourrienne still shakes his head, saying the job may not be an easy one. Fouché is a wily old pike, and has escaped so many dangers that he is not likely to allow himself to be netted in the broad light of day. Time and careful thought are needed by a fisherman setting out on such a venture. Still, he gives the order for the arrest. Actually, then, on March 16, 1815, at eleven o'clock in the morning, policemen surround the Duke of Otranto's carriage when he is out for an airing on the boulevards, and declare him under arrest, in con-

formity with Bourrienne's command. Fouché, who never loses his presence of mind, smiles disdainfully, saying: "An ex-minister, an ex-senator, cannot be thus arrested in the public street." Then, before the police agents, who for so long were his own subordinates, have recovered from their surprise, he orders his coachman to whip up the horses and to drive home at full speed. Open-mouthed the policemen stand there, breathing in the dust raised by the departing wheels. Bourrienne was right. It is not so easy to lay hands on a man who escaped the clutches of Robespierre, who defied an order of the Convention, and who kept a whole skin after deliberately opposing the will of Napoleon.

When the policemen report to their chief that Fouché has eluded them, Bourrienne is pricked into sharper action. Now it behoves him to maintain his authority, and to show that no one can make fun of him. He promptly has the house in the Rue Cerutti surrounded, and the door kept under close observation, while a file of armed men mount the steps and enter the house in order to seize the fugitive. But Fouché has another jest to play, one of those unique masterstrokes that come to him always in the most difficult situations. We have seen again and again that when he is in imminent danger he is seized by a lust for amusing himself at people's expense and for leading them a dance. This adept in the art of mystification therefore receives with extreme courtesy those who have come to arrest him, and asks to be shown the warrant. Yes, it appears to be in order, and he is the person nominated therein. It would be needless for him to

say that he has no thought of resisting His Majesty's command. Perhaps his visitors will be good enough to sit down for a moment while he attends to a few trifling matters, and then he will come with them. With these polite assurances, Fouché withdraws into the next room. The others wait respectfully while he is arranging his toilet. After all, a senator, a sometime minister of State and court dignitary, must not be collared like a pick-pocket and dragged off in handcuffs. They wait respectfully; they wait for a good long time; they wait so long that at length their suspicions are aroused. Then, since he still does not return, they too go into the next room, to discover there—a scene of true comedy amid the political tumult—that Fouché has slipped through their fingers. This man of fifty-six, as if he had been an actor for the cinema to be invented wellnigh a century later, going out into the garden, has placed a ladder against the wall, and, while the police are waiting for him respectfully in the drawing-room, has with remarkable agility climbed over into the adjoining garden of Queen Hortense's house, and has thence made good his escape. That evening, all Paris is laughing over the successful coup. Of course the Duke of Otranto is too well known to remain hidden for long. The joke must be of brief duration. But Fouché has once more calculated rightly. He knows that it will be enough if he can lie perdu for a few hours, and then the King and those who remain loyal to him will have to make their own escape unless they want to be seized by Napoleon's advance cavalry. Hastily boxes are being packed in the Tuileries, and all

that Louis XVIII has achieved by issuing the order for arrest is to provide Fouché with excellent evidence of a (non-existent) loyalty to the Emperor—a loyalty in which Napoleon will certainly not believe. Still, when the Emperor hears of this consummate political artist's latest trick, he cannot help laughing, and says with angry amazement: "Il est décidément plus malin qu'eux tous."—"He is certainly the most artful dodger of them all!"

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE LAST TUSSLE WITH NAPOLEON

1815, the Hundred Days.

Towards midnight on March 19, 1815, when the streets are dark and deserted, twelve carriages drive into the courtyard of the Tuileries. A side-door opens, and through it there emerges, torch in hand, a servant. Behind him there walks slowly and laboriously, supported by two loyal noblemen, a fat man, coughing asthmatically: Louis XVIII. At sight of the invalid monarch, who, so recently returned to his country after nearly a quarter of a century's exile, must now flee from it again in the dead of night, all present are filled with profound sympathy. Most of them bend the knee while this man, undignified in his decrepitude, but touching in the tragedy of his old age, is helped into his carriage. Then the traces tighten as the horses start, the other carriages follow, and for a few minutes a clattering noise continues as the accompanying guardsmen trot across the stone pavement. At length the huge square lies dark and quiet once more, until morning dawns, the morning of March 20th, the first of the Hundred Days of Emperor Napoleon back from Elba.

The first comers to the palace are those greedy for news. With dilated nostrils they snuff round the place

in order to discover whether the royal quarry has escaped before the arrival of the Emperor. Shopkeepers, idlers, people taking a morning stroll, some of them anxious and others cheerful as their temperaments and moods vary, ask one another the latest news. By ten o'clock, a great crowd has assembled. Since when men get together in large numbers they give one another courage, some of them at length venture to shout: "Vive l'empereur!" and "A bas le roi!" Mounted officers ride up, some of those who were put on half-pay under the restored monarchy. They foresee war, active occupation, full pay once more, decorations, promotions. All good things will follow for them now that the fighting Emperor has returned. Shouting tumultuously, led by General Excelmans, they occupy the Tuileries without opposition. Since the change of ownership here has been effected so easily, and without any bloodshed, that morning on the Bourse the funds promptly rise a few points. By noon, though not a shot has been fired, the tricolour is waving once again above the royal palace.

Already a hundred persons hoping to profit by the Emperor's return have put in an appearance: ladies of the bedchamber, servants, stewards, kitchen marshals, former privy councillors and masters of ceremonies; all those who under the fleur-de-lis had been thrown out of employment; and the members of the new nobility, uplifted by Napoleon from among the ruins of the revolution. All of them are sporting their best clothes—the generals, the officers of lower grade, and the ladies. Diamonds are sparkling once more, swords clanking, be-

jewelled stars flashing. The rooms are being opened and aired and made ready for the reception of the new master; with the utmost possible speed the royal emblems are being removed, so that on the silken chair covers there may be displayed the Napoleonic bee, instead of the royal lily. All are eager to be on hand in good time, to make themselves conspicuous by a prompt display of "loyalty." Now the evening has come. As on the occasion of dances and great receptions, liveried servants light up the candelabra. The windows of what is once again to be the imperial palace flash their lights as far as the Arc de Triomphe, attracting huge crowds of inquisitive spectators to the Tuileries Gardens.

At length, at nine o'clock, a carriage drives up with the horses at full gallop, preceded, followed, and flanked by cavalrymen of all grades, swinging enthusiastically the sabres which they will soon have to use against the united armies of Europe. Like an explosion, a clamorous shout of "Vive l'empereur" breaks forth from the assembled masses, and echoes from the walls of the palace. In waves, the excited populace breaks against the imperial carriage, until the soldiers have to fend off the throng at the point of the sword, and thus to protect the Emperor from the dangers of too exuberant a welcome. Then some of these same soldiers themselves reverently lift up their sacred booty, their great war god, and, amid deafening cheers, carry him into the palace. Borne upon the shoulders of his own men, his eyes closed in excess of happiness, and with a strange almost somnambulant smile on his lips—

thus does the man who only three weeks before had been an exile in Elba find his way back to the imperial throne of France. It is Napoleon Bonaparte's last triumph. For the last time he experiences this incredible transformation, this dream flight from obscurity to the highest pinnacles of power. For the last time his ears are assailed by those shouts of "Vive l'empereur" rising from thousands of throats. The sound comes in unceasing pulses, like the roar of the sea. For a minute, for ten minutes, he enjoys the intoxicating elixir. Then he has the palace gates closed; the officers are dismissed to their quarters and the ministers of State are summoned; work begins. He has to defend what fate has given him.

The rooms are packed with those who have come to wait upon the returning exile. But the very first glance is disappointing. Those who have remained true to him are not the best, the wisest, the most notable of his servants. He sees courtiers and courteous persons, place-hunters, and seekers after novelty—many uniforms and very few outstanding intelligences. Few of the great marshals are there, few of the real comrades of his ascent. They have remained at their country seats or have gone over to the King; in the best event they are neutral, but most of them are hostile. Of the ministers, the ablest of all, the man with the widest experience of the world, Talleyrand, is absent; the kings and queens new-made by Napoleon's grace, his own brothers and sisters, are absent; and, most distressing of all, he notes the absence of his wife and boy. He sees many toadies and very few honest helpers among the swarm. The sweet of the acclama-

tions which hailed his first appearance is already turning sour, and, with his usual perspicacity, even on this night of triumph he begins to sense the imminence of danger. But suddenly there comes a murmur from the anteroom, a murmur of astonishment and delight, and among the figures in uniforms and court dresses a lane opens respectfully. A carriage has driven up, rather late indeed, bearing a man who has come of his own accord, though he was not obsequious enough to be on hand awaiting the Emperor's arrival—the Duke of Otranto, who offers his services, but not importunately like the petty courtiers. Slowly, impassively, eyes lowered, inscrutable as ever, without troubling to thank those who make way for him, he walks onwards through the lane of human figures. His familiar quietude awakens enthusiasm. "Room for the Duke of Otranto!" cry the servants. Those who are well acquainted with him repeat the cry, but in somewhat different words: "Fouché! Room for Monsieur Fouché!" They realize that he is the man whom the Emperor needs above all at this moment. The public opinion of these rooms has chosen him, has recognized him as the man of the hour, before the Emperor himself has time to decide. Fouché does not come to seek favours, but as a power, majestically and gravely. Nor does Napoleon keep him waiting, but instantly summons this man, the most long-standing of his ministers, the most faithful of his enemies, to a private consultation. We know as little concerning the details of this interview as we know of that first interview as a result of which Fouché helped the general returning without

leave from Egypt to become Consul, and bound himself, in unfaithful faith, to Bonaparte's service. But when, after an hour's talk, Fouché comes out of the room, he is once again, and for the third time, Napoleon's Minister of Police.

Before the ink is dry in the issue of the "Moniteur" which announces the appointment of the Duke of Otranto to be one of Napoleon's ministers, master and servant are both secretly regretful at having entered into renewed dealings with one another. Fouché is disappointed, for he had expected a more important post. Long, long ago his ambition had become dissatisfied with the minor position of minister of police. Whereas in 1799, to the hungry, despised, and rejected ex-Jacobin Joseph Fouché such a post had seemed an ark of safety and a great distinction, in 1815, to the millionaire Duke of Otranto, a man generally admired, it appeared a pitiful sinecure. His self-confidence has grown with his success; nothing can now satisfy him but the great game of world politics, the stimulating hazards of European diplomacy, with the whole continent as gaming-table and the fate of entire countries as the stakes. For ten years Talleyrand, the only statesman equal to himself in ability, has blocked his path. Now, when this most formidable of his rivals is measuring forces against Napoleon, and in Vienna is assembling the bayonets of all Europe to overthrow the Emperor, Fouché considers himself to have a claim upon the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, since he is the only person left competent for the task.

But Napoleon, who has good reason for being suspicious of Fouché, withholds this most important of the portfolios from the hand which is indeed clever, but too clever by half and thoroughly untrustworthy. The Emperor is glad enough to assign the Ministry of Police to the Duke of Otranto, knowing as he does that the man must be given at least some share in power lest frustrated ambition should make him vindictive. But even then Napoleon, having reluctantly made the appointment, sets a spy to watch the Minister of Police, appointing Fouché's bitterest enemy, the Duke of Rovigo, to be chief of the gendarmerie. Thus upon the first day when the relations of master and servant are renewed, the old game recommences. Napoleon has a reserve police force to safeguard himself against his own Minister of Police, while Fouché carries on a policy of his own beside and behind that of the Emperor. Each is trying to cheat the other, and neither of them makes much effort to hide his intentions. Time will show which gets the upper hand, the stronger or the shrewder, the man of hot blood, or the man of cold.

Fouché accepts the Ministry of Police, though he accepts it unwillingly. Brilliant and passionate gamester as he is, he has one grave defect; he cannot stand aside from the game, and is fretted beyond endurance if even for an hour he has to be a mere spectator of its progress. He must always have cards in his own hands, must stake the limit, must cheat his adversaries and lead them astray, must challenge them and trump their best cards. He must always be sitting at one of the tables, no mat-

ter which, no matter whether it be royal, imperial, or republican—so long as he is at one of them, where he can "avoir la main dans la pâte," where he can have a finger in the pie—then he does not care whose pie it is, if only he is a minister, of the Right, of the Left, of the Emperor, of the King. The one thing that matters to him is that he should have political power. He will never have the moral strength, the prudence, or the pride to refuse any fragment of power which is flung to him. He will always accept any post that is offered. To him men and causes matter nothing; his only interest is in the game.

No less unwillingly does Napoleon take Fouché into his service once more. He has known this dweller in the shadows for a decade and a half; he knows that Fouché never truly serves anyone but himself, and is never guided by anything but his own passion for the game. He knows that Fouché will be ready to throw him aside like a squeezed orange, will be ready to abandon him in the moment of utmost peril, as he abandoned the Girondists, the terrorists, Robespierre, and the Thermidorists; as he abandoned Barras his saviour, the Directory, the Republic, and the Consulate—cheated and deserted them one and all. But he needs the man, needs him or thinks he needs him. Just as Napoleon fascinates Fouché by his genius, so Fouché fascinates Napoleon by his usefulness. To give him the go-by would be dangerous, and at so ticklish a moment not even a Napoleon will venture to make an enemy of a Fouché. It is a choice of evils and he chooses the lesser, which is to give the man employment, to keep him busied in unfaithful service. "Only from

traitors have I heard the truth," said the dethroned Emperor subsequently in St. Helena, and he was thinking of Fouché. Even in the extremity of his wrath, Napoleon still has respect for the remarkable capacities of this Mephistophelean man, inasmuch as there is nothing of which genius is more impatient than mediocrity. Thus, though he knows that he is cheated by Fouché, Napoleon is always pleased to think that Fouché understands him. Just as a man dying of thirst will drink water even when he knows it to be poisoned, the Emperor will rather take this clever and untrustworthy intriguer into his service than one who is stupid and trustworthy. Ten years of fierce hostility will sometimes bind people more closely together than a commonplace friendship.

For ten years and more Fouché has served Napoleon, the minister has served the master, the man of lesser genius has served the man of greater; for ten years and more Fouché has been the subordinate. But in 1815, when the last tussle comes, Napoleon is really the weaker. Once again, and now for the last time, he has experienced the intoxication of glory; he has been able to make an eagle's flight from the Mediterranean isle back to the imperial throne. Soldiers sent against him and outnumbering his little force by a hundred to one have espoused his cause at the mere sight of his cloak. Within three weeks the exile, who had set out with only six hundred men, enters Paris at the head of an army, and, with the acclamations of thousands still ringing in his ears, he falls asleep once more in the bed of the

kings of France. But a sad awakening follows, and his dreams are speedily dispelled when confronted with sober reality. True, he is Emperor once more, but only in name, for the world, which had lain bound at his feet, no longer recognizes him as its master. He writes letters and proclamations, sends out passionate assurances of his pacific intentions; but those who read them shrug their shoulders, smile contemptuously, and do not deign to answer. He sends messages to the Emperor of Austria, but they are ruthlessly intercepted. One letter only reaches Vienna by devious routes, and this is thrown by Metternich unopened on the table. A vacant space has formed round him; his old friends and companions-in-arms have scattered in all directions; Berthier, Brienne, Murat, Eugène Beauharnais, Bernadotte, Augereau, and Talleyrand—all of them sit quietly at home, or, worse still, help his enemies. Vainly does he attempt to deceive himself and others. He has the apartments of the Empress and the King of Rome gorgeously redecorated, as if they were coming back on the morrow, when in reality Marie Louise is amusing herself very agreeably with her lover Neipperg, and the little boy, carefully guarded by Emperor Francis, is playing with Austrian tin soldiers at Schönbrunn. Nor does even France recognize the tricolour. There are risings in the south and in the west; the peasants are weary of the everlasting requisitions, and fire on the gendarmes who come to levy their horses for use with the artillery. In the streets there are to be seen mocking posters, ostensibly signed by Napoleon: "Article I. Every year there must

be delivered over to me three hundred thousand men as cannon fodder. Article 2. If necessary, this number will be increased to three million. Article 3. All these victims will be sent post-haste to the great slaughter-house." Indubitably the world is longing for peace, and all reasonable persons are ready to send to the devil this man whose return is so unwelcome—unless, indeed, he can guarantee peace. But therein lies the tragedy of his position, for now, when the fighting Emperor for the first time in his life really wants peace for himself and for the world (provided, of course, that he is allowed to be its ruler!), the world no longer believes his asseverations. The worthy cits, anxious about the stability of their incomes, are by no means inclined to share the enthusiasm of the half-pay officers and professional cock-fighters to whom peace only means an interruption to business; and when, perforce, Napoleon grants them the suffrage, they give him a slap in the face by electing the very men whom fifteen years earlier he had persecuted and driven into obscurity, the revolutionists of 1792, Lafayette and Lanjuinais. He has no allies outside France, and very few whole-hearted supporters within the country; there is scarcely a soul with whom he can hold familiar counsel. Uneasily and apprehensively the Emperor wanders through the rooms of his empty palace. His nerves have lost their tone, so that he vacillates between fits of uncontrolled violence and periods of lethargy. He often needs a spell of sleep in the middle of the day, being prostrated for hours at a time by fatigue, not of the body, but of the mind. Once Carnot

finds him in his private apartments, his eyes streaming with tears as he stares at a portrait of the King of Rome. To his intimates he complains that luck has deserted him. An inward monitor warns him that his career has passed the zenith, with the result that the needle of his will sways idly and restlessly from pole to pole. Reluctantly at length, uninspired by genuine hope, eager for an understanding with his enemies, does the man of many victories set out for war. He sets out in vain. Victory showers her laurels on none but the self-confident.

Such is Napoleon in 1815, master and Emperor in semblance only, and, by the transient favour of destiny, equipped with nothing more than the shadow of power. But Fouché, who stands beside him, is at the climax of his energies. The dagger of reason, tempered steel, kept sharp and bright in the sheath of cunning, does not get worn out like passion, turning incessantly in its bearings. Never has Fouché shown himself abler, subtler, bolder, than in those Hundred Days between the re-establishment and the final overthrow of the Empire, so that it is to him, and not to Napoleon that eyes turn expectantly, hoping to find in him the saviour. Strange indeed is it to see that every one has more confidence in this minister of the Emperor than in the Emperor himself. Louis XVIII, the republicans, the royalists, London, Vienna, all regard Fouché as the only person with whom they can effectively negotiate; and his coldly calculating reason inspires more confidence in a world that is exhausted and in grievous need of peace, than does the

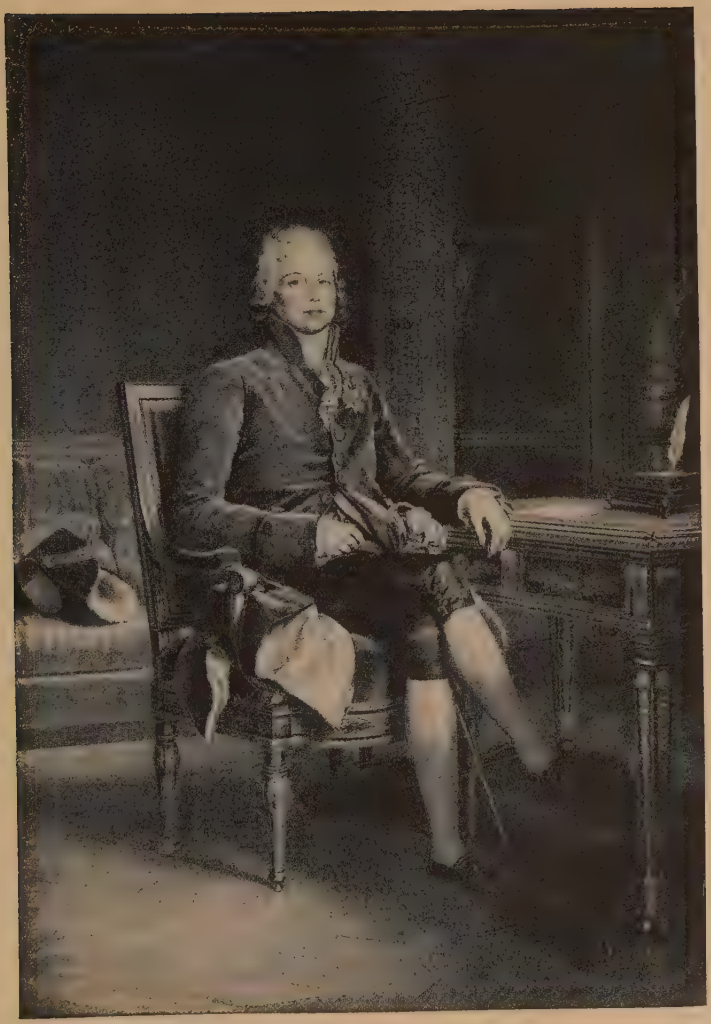
genius of Napoleon, now flickering ominously in the wind. The very same persons who refuse to concede to "General Bonaparte" the title of Emperor, respect the personal credit of Fouché. The very frontiers at which the State messengers of imperial France are arrested and kept out of mischief, open as if by magic before the secret emissaries of the Duke of Otranto. Wellington, Metternich, Talleyrand, the Duke of Orleans, the Tsar, the Kings, one and all receive his messengers willingly and with the utmost courtesy, so that Fouché, who has cheated everybody in turn, is now regarded as the only reliable operator in the political world. He has merely to lift a finger and everything happens in accordance with his will. There is a rising in Vendée, with the likelihood of a sanguinary struggle; but it is enough for Fouché to send a message, and the civil war is called off. By a frank calculation, he persuades the combatants to hold their hands. "Why," he asks, "should any more French blood be sacrificed at this juncture? Within a few months the Emperor will have proved victorious or will have been beaten. What is the use of fighting for a prize which will probably fall into your laps without a struggle? Lay down your arms and await the issue!" Thereupon the royalist generals, convinced by this sober and unsentimental argument, sign the desired pact. Whether at home or abroad, every one applies first to Fouché. Parliament decides nothing without his approval. Napoleon has to look on impotently while this servant of his paralyses his actions, engineers the elections in a sense unfavourable to him, and conjures up out of the

ground a parliament whose mood is republican, that it may serve as a brake upon the Emperor's despotic will. In vain does Napoleon long to free himself from Fouché. The glorious days of autocracy are over, the days when the Duke of Otranto could be sent into retirement with a few millions as compensation. Now it would be easier for the minister to dispossess the Emperor of his throne than for the Emperor to deprive the Duke of Otranto of his ministerial portfolio.

These weeks of arbitrary and yet thoughtful, ambiguous and nevertheless clear policy, are among the most brilliant in the history of diplomacy. Even Lamartine, an idealist and a personal opponent, cannot withhold his tribute to the Machiavellian genius of Fouché. "We have to recognize," writes the great French poet, "that Fouché showed rare courage and undismayed energy. His head might any day answer for his intrigues, and he was in danger of being crushed at any moment should Napoleon give way to shame or anger. Among all those who still survived from the days of the Convention, he alone showed no signs of wear and tear, and he alone retained undiminished courage. Though hampered by his delicate position between tyranny, which was reviving, and liberty, which was eager to revive; and on the other hand between Napoleon, who was sacrificing France to his private interest, and France which was unwilling to be bled to death for the sake of one single individual—Fouché intimidated the Emperor, cajoled the republicans, tranquillized France, made significant gestures to Europe, looked smilingly towards Louis XVIII, nego-

tiated with the court, corresponded by signs with Monsieur de Talleyrand, and was able to keep everything trembling in the balance. Thus he played a part which was extremely complicated and immensely difficult, which was simultaneously base and sublime, and was unquestionably stupendous—a part to which historians have not as yet devoted sufficient attention. The rôle was not one which displayed nobility of soul, but it was not devoid of patriotism and heroism, being one in which a subject was placing himself on a level with his sovereign and in which a minister was arrogating to himself powers greater than those of the supreme ruler of the State. He made himself arbiter between the Empire, the Restoration, and Liberty, but became arbiter through duplicity. History, while condemning Fouché, cannot deny that during this period of the Hundred Days he showed a boldness in his conduct, a mastery in the management of parties, and a greatness in intrigue, which would place him in the first rank of the statesmen of the century if there could be true statesmen without dignity of character and without virtue."

Thus perspicacious is the judgment of Lamartine, the poet, the statesman, the contemporary, writing in a period when his memory of these events was still fresh. The Napoleonic legend, formulated fifty years later, when the ten million dead had mouldered into dust, when the mutilated had been buried, and when the wounds of Europe had long since been healed, naturally takes a much harsher view of Fouché, and is far less just.



TALLEYRAND

FROM A PAINTING BY FRANÇOIS GÉRARD

A heroic legend is invariably a sort of spiritual hinterland of history, and, of course, like every hinterland, charges a very low price for the virtues which it has not itself to provide: unrestricted human sacrifices, unceasing devotion to the heroic illusion, the death of heroes at a remote time or in a remote place, and senseless loyalty displayed by others under the same conditions. The Napoleonic legend, therefore, with its compulsory black-and-white technique, knows only those who have been "true" to its hero and those who have "betrayed" him; it makes no distinction between the earlier Napoleon, the Consul, whose shrewdness and energy bestowed upon his country the boons of peace and order, and the later Napoleon, the megalomaniac, with whom war-making had become a craze, who impelled by his lust for power again and again dragged the world ruthlessly into sanguinary adventures, and who once said to Metternich, in the spirit of Tamerlane: "Such a man as I am does not care a straw for the lives of a million soldiers." With Dantesque wrath, the legend casts into its Inferno every reasonable Frenchman who ventured to resist the insane ambition of this man possessed by the evil one, all who counselled moderation when he was storming towards his own destruction, all who refused to harness themselves slavishly to his car of Juggernaut. Thus Talleyrand, Bourrienne, and Murat were among the damned; and Fouché, above all, was regarded as the arch-traitor, as the advocatus diaboli.

According to the Napoleonic legend, then, Fouché only joined the ministry in 1815 that he might win an

advantageous position from which, at the right moment, to stab the Emperor in the back, being sold from the first to Louis XVIII and the European powers. He is supposed to have said to the monarchists when the King was about to drive away: "You save His Majesty, and I will undertake to save the Monarchy"; and on the day of accepting a portfolio under the restored Emperor the legend has it that he declared to his friend Garnier: "My first duty is to countermine the Emperor's plans. Within three months, I shall be stronger than he, and if by then he has not had me shot, he will be on his knees before me." Assuredly this prophecy coincides too closely with actual dates not to have been manufactured after the event.

But to suppose that Fouché was from the very beginning of the Hundred Days an adherent of Louis XVIII, that it was as the King's paid spy that he entered Napoleon's ministry, is to underestimate him completely, is utterly to misunderstand the complicated psychology of the man and the mysterious daimonism of his character. I do not for a moment mean to imply that Fouché, the complete amoralist and perfect Machiavellian, would have been incapable of this or any other act of treachery had the circumstances demanded it; but the particular form of baseness which the legend ascribes to him would have been too simple for his taste, and altogether unattractive to his bold temperament with its lust for the chances of the game. It was not his way to be content with cheating one man only, even were that man a Napoleon. His sole delight was to cheat every one, to commit him-

self wholly to nobody, to lure every one on, to work simultaneously with all parties and against all parties, never to act in accordance with preconceived plans, but, guided by the promptings of the moment, to be Proteus, the god of change. He was not a straightforward intriguer, like Franz Moor or King Richard III; his passion for diplomacy could only be gratified by a scintillating rôle, and one which was a surprise even to himself. He loved difficulties for their own sake, doubling them, trebling them, and quadrupling them; he was a universal traitor. Napoleon, who knew him best, made when in St. Helena the profound remark: "I have known only one really perfect traitor, Fouché!" A perfect traitor, a finished traitor, a complete traitor, not a casual traitor but a genius at treachery—this describes him, for treason is not so much his purpose, his tactic, as an expression of his inmost nature. We shall perhaps best grasp the essence of the man from the analogy of the double spies we have all heard of in war-time, those who bring foreign powers secret intelligence in order to have a chance of discovering secrets which they may carry away with them, so that, in this commerce, they cease at last to know which power they are really serving. Such men are paid by both sides and are true to neither, and what they really serve is the game they are playing, the game of being a go-between in either direction in turn; they are serving an immaterial but deadly and diabolical lust. Not until the balance definitively inclines to one side or to the other does reason resume its sway over the passion for the game, so that the player may safely pouch

his winnings. Fouché never decides until one party to the struggle has gained a victory. It was so when he was a member of the Convention; it was so under the Directory, under the Consulate, and under the Empire. While the struggle is in progress, he has no side; when it is over, he is always on the side of the victor. Had Grouchy arrived in time, Fouché (for a while, anyhow) would have remained a minister of Napoleon. Since Napoleon is defeated, Fouché drops him and falls away from him. Without attempting to defend himself, with his customary cynicism, he uttered an effective epigram concerning his own conduct during the Hundred Days: "It was not I who betrayed Napoleon, but Waterloo."

Still it is natural that Napoleon should be greatly enraged by his minister's duplicity, for he knows that this time his own head is at stake. Every morning now, just as ten years back, the lean, lantern-jawed man, his face paler and more bloodless than ever above the dark embroidered uniform coat, comes into his room and gives a report, an admirably clear, irrefutable report concerning the situation. No one could possibly have a better understanding of the march of events, no one could give a more luminous survey of the world's situation, than this man with his all-embracing insight. Napoleon recognizes this, and yet at the same time he feels that Fouché invariably keeps something back. The Emperor knows that the Duke of Otranto is receiving messengers from the foreign powers; that morning, noon, and night his own cabinet minister is holding conversations with

royalist agents behind closed doors; that relations are being entered into about which he himself is told nothing. Is it true, as Fouché would like him to believe, that these secret interviews are merely part of a system for gleaning information, or are they elements in a web of intrigue directed against himself? Terrible uncertainties for a hunted man, surrounded by countless enemies! Sometimes the Emperor makes friendly inquiries, sometimes he warns and exhorts, sometimes he angrily pours forth his suspicions and overwhelms Fouché with accusations; but all is equally futile, for the thin lips remain closed, and the glassy eyes are inscrutable. He gets no real contact with Fouché, is unable to drag the man's secrets from him. Napoleon is in a fever. What can he do? How is he to learn whether Fouché, who sees every one's cards and keeps his own hidden, is betraying him or betraying his foes? How can he come to grips with the intangible? How can he penetrate the impenetrable?

At length something happens to relieve the tension; there is a clue, almost a proof. In April the secret police, the Emperor's own private police specially engaged to watch the Minister of Police, discovered that a man supposed to be an employee of a Viennese bank has come to Paris and has immediately sought out the Duke of Otranto. The emissary is promptly arrested, and, of course without informing Fouché, is brought before Napoleon in a summer-house in the Elysée Garden. There he is browbeaten and intimidated, is told he will be instantly shot unless he discloses the truth; so at last he confesses to having been the bearer of a letter to

Fouché from Metternich written in invisible ink, a letter which was to arrange for a meeting of confidential agents in Basle. Napoleon foams with rage. Such an exchange of letters between the minister of his enemies and his own minister is tantamount to high treason. The first thought is to have Fouché arrested and to seize his papers. But the Emperor's advisers dissuade him from this course. They say that as yet there is no direct proof of treasonable practices, and that anyhow the Duke of Otranto is far too cautious, if he should really be guilty, to leave any documentary evidence undestroyed. Napoleon, therefore, decides to put Fouché's fidelity to the test. Having summoned him, the Emperor takes a leaf out of Fouché's own book and speaks with unwonted dissimulation. He sounds the minister as to the possibility of coming to an accommodation with Austria. Fouché, unaware that the emissary from Vienna has blabbed the whole affair, talks the matter over without saying a word about Metternich's letter. At length the Emperor dismisses him with feigned equanimity, but is now absolutely convinced that Fouché is playing him false. Hoping to get proof of the man's guilt, he plans a little drama, a grim one, and yet a comedy as delectable as one of Molière's. The man from Vienna has told him the password and countersign for the proposed meeting at Basle. The Emperor, therefore, sends to Switzerland a confidential agent of his own who is to pretend to be Fouché's agent. The Austrian will accept him as such in good faith, and will disclose everything, so that at length the Emperor will know, not merely that Fouché has be-

trayed him, but to what extent. In a few days, Fouché will be caught in his own snare.

But, snatch as quickly as you may, you will not be able to seize an eel or a snake with your bare hands. The Emperor's comedy, like every good comedy, has a double foundation. Thus just as Napoleon has his own secret police to watch Fouché, so Fouché has private spies to watch the doings of the Emperor. His agents work no less nimbly than the Emperor's. On the very day when Napoleon's messenger sets out for the "Three Kings" in Basle, Fouché gets wind of the affair, which is betrayed to him by one of Napoleon's "confidants." He, who was to have been taken by surprise, surprises his master next morning at their daily interview. While talking of other things, he suddenly slaps his forehead with the air of a man who has forgotten a comparatively unimportant trifle: "By the way, Sire, I never told you that I have had a letter from Metternich; my mind was so full of things of greater moment. Besides, his emissary omitted to give me the powder needed to make the writing legible, and at first I suspected a mystification. But here, at length, is the letter."

The Emperor can no longer contain his anger: "You are a traitor, Fouché," he shouts. "I ought to have you hanged."

"Sire, I do not share Your Majesty's opinion," answers Fouché, imperturbable as ever.

Napoleon is beside himself with wrath. Once more Fra Diavolo has escaped him, thanks to this untimely

and undesired acknowledgment. Besides, the confidential agent, when he returns from Basle a few days later, has very little of value to report concerning the interview with Metternich's envoy, and what he does tell is neither decisive nor agreeable. It is undecisive because, as the behaviour of the Austrian agent shows, Fouché has been far too cautious, far too subtle, to commit himself to anything; the game he has been playing has only been his favourite game of keeping in touch with all possibilities. The report is likewise extremely disagreeable inasmuch as it is to the effect that the powers are prepared to accommodate themselves to any form of government in France—except government by Napoleon Bonaparte. The Emperor bites his lips. His blow has been parried, his endeavour to catch Fouché unawares has failed, the man who walks in the shadows remains uninjured, and the only result of the duel in the darkness is that the Emperor himself has received a deadly wound.

Fouché's parry has deprived Napoleon of his opportunity. "I am convinced that he is betraying me," says the Emperor. "I am sorry I did not get rid of him before he informed me that he was corresponding with Metternich. Now I lack an excuse for dismissing him; he would shout from all the housetops that I am a suspicious tyrant and that I had sacrificed him without just cause." The Emperor knows perfectly well that he has met more than his match, but he goes on fighting until the last minute, in the hope that either he will be able,

after all, to win over the double-faced man to his cause, or else will be able to trip him and overthrow him. He pulls out all the stops. He tries confidence, friendliness, forbearance, and caution; but his strong will breaks vainly against this cold and dazzling stone, polished in all its facets. You can crush a diamond or throw it away, but you can never penetrate it. At length Napoleon's overstrained nerves give way. The atmosphere of suspicion has been too much for him. Carnot has described the scene in which the Emperor's impotence as against the man who is troubling his peace is dramatically disclosed. "You are betraying me, Duke of Otranto; I have proofs of it," cries Napoleon in the course of a ministerial council. Seizing an ivory-handled dagger which lies on the table, he goes on: "Take this knife and plunge it into my breast. That would be more loyal than what you are doing. If I liked, I could have you shot, and all the world would applaud such an act of justice. You will ask, perhaps, why I don't do this. It is because I despise you, and because you do not weigh so much as an ounce in my scales." We see that his mistrust has become fury, and that his sense of torment has swelled to hatred. Fouché knows that Napoleon will never forget or forgive the man who has thus provoked him. But he himself is aware that the Emperor's power is rapidly waning. "In four weeks from now it will be over and done with as far as this savage is concerned," he says confidently and disdainfully to his friends. That is why he has no thought of coming to terms. They are engaged in a final contest, and one or other of them will have to be cleared

out of the way. He knows (Napoleon has said as much) that the first tidings of victory to reach Paris will be accompanied by an order for Fouché's dismissal, and perhaps by one for his arrest. The clock seems to have gone back twenty years—to 1794—when the mightiest man of the day, Robespierre, had said no less decisively that within a fortnight a head must fall, either Fouché's or his own. Since then, however, the Duke of Otranto has grown self-confident. When one of his friends warns him against the danger of Napoleon's wrath, Fouché recounts that ancient threat, and adds with a smile: "It was his head which fell into the basket."

On June 18th, the cannon in front of the Invalides begin to boom. The populace flocks to the spot. For the last fifteen years, every one in Paris has been familiar with this gun-metal voice. A battle has been fought, the imperial troops have been successful, Blücher and Wellington have been completely defeated—thus runs the report in the "Moniteur." The boulevards are thronged with a holiday crowd, whose temper, which has been vacillating of late, suddenly hardens to one of enthusiastic loyalty towards the Emperor. But the funds, a delicate barometer, fall four points, for every victory of Napoleon signifies a prolongation of the war. We may suppose that one man, at least, trembles at the news. The despot's victory may cost Fouché his head.

But, by the irony of fate, at the very moment when in Paris the French guns are saluting the triumph, the British guns at Waterloo are exterminating the imperial

infantry and guards; and that evening, while the capital is preparing for the illuminations, the Prussian cavalry is riding down the last fragments of the fleeing French army.

Unsuspecting Paris can still enjoy another day of confidence. Not until the 20th does the sinister news begin to trickle through. Pale, with twitching lips, people whisper the alarming rumours one to another. In the Chambers, on the boulevards, at the Bourse, in the barracks, everywhere, people are discussing the catastrophe, although the newpapers are paralysed into silence. The metropolis is full of plaints and murmurs, is buzzing with hopes and fears.

Only one person acts: Fouché. As soon as he receives the news (before every one else, it need hardly be said) of the disaster to the French arms at Waterloo, he regards Napoleon as nothing better than a troublesome corpse, to be got rid of as speedily as possible. He promptly takes up a spade to dig the fallen Emperor's grave. Without a moment's delay, he writes to the Duke of Wellington, being determined to be beforehand in getting into touch with the victor. He shows his unparalleled psychological acumen by warning the parliamentary deputies that Napoleon's first endeavour will be to send them all to the right about, to dismiss them to their homes. The Emperor will come back more furious than ever, and will instantly demand a dictatorship. A spoke must be put in his wheel! That same evening, parliament has already been influenced, the ministerial council has been induced to decide against Napoleon, whose last

chance of retaining power has thus been destroyed—all this before he has had time to set foot in Paris. The hero of the hour is no longer Napoleon Bonaparte, but at last, at long last, Joseph Fouché.

Just before dawn, wrapped in the mantle of night and seated in a rickety chaise (Blücher has made a prize of his State carriage, with the crown treasures, his sword, and his papers), the Emperor drives through the gates of Paris and up to the Elysée. Six days before, in an army order, he had written with dramatic emphasis: "For every brave Frenchman the moment has come to conquer or to die." He himself has neither conquered nor died—though at Ligny and Waterloo sixty thousand men have perished on his behalf. He has hurried back as he did from Egypt and from Moscow. When he came from Egypt he was inspired with the hope of seizing power. Now, as when he returned from Moscow, his aim is to maintain power if he can. He has delayed a little at the last, that he may enter the city under cover of darkness. And instead of making for the Tuileries that he may meet the representatives of the people in his imperial palace, he shelters his agitation in the smaller and more retired Elysée.

The man who gets out of the carriage is weary and crushed. He mutters incoherent words, stammers confused phrases, trying to find explanations of his defeat and excuses for the inevitable. A hot bath restores him a little, so that he can summon his council. Uneasily, in a mood fluctuating between anger and sympathy, respectfully to outward seeming but not animated with gen-

uine respect, his advisers listen to the cloudy and febrile harangue of the conquered Emperor, who still babbles of the great armies he is going to raise, who says he will requisition all the carriage horses in the country, who reckons up (to those who know perfectly well how hard it would be to extract another hundred soldiers from the exhausted land) that in a fortnight he will be able to put a new army of two hundred thousand men into the field against the Allies. The ministers, Fouché among them, stand with bowed heads. They know that such lucubrations are only the last twitchings of that titanic will to power which still flares up fitfully in the decaying giant. As Fouché had prophesied, he demands a dictatorship, that all power, both military and political may be concentrated into his own hands. It is likely enough, however, that when he makes this demand it is only in expectation of a refusal, so that later he will be able to shift the blame on to the shoulders of his ministers, and to declare that they deprived him of a last chance of victory. Recent happenings present us with analogies!

The ministers answer cautiously, for they are unwilling, by any harsh words, to hurt the feelings of this suffering man, of this patient afflicted with the delirium of fever. Fouché alone has no need to say anything. He has long since taken the necessary steps to frustrate Napoleon's last attempt to retain power. Without compassion—with the cold aloofness of a physician who watches the last convulsions of a dying man, studying with a purely clinical interest when the pulse will cease beating and when the resistance to death will be overcome—he

listens to these futile utterances of despair. Not a word passes his thin and pallid lips. Napoleon is moribund, is doomed, is finished; what do his mouthings matter? Fouché knows that while the Emperor is intoxicating himself with fancies and is doing his best to intoxicate his hearers, little more than half a mile away, in the Tuileries, the Chambers are, with pitiless logic, deciding in accordance with Fouché's wishes, to which there is no longer any hindrance.

Fouché, indeed, just as he had kept away from the Convention on the ninth Thermidor, keeps away from the Chamber of Deputies on this 21st of June. Enough for him that he has assembled his batteries under cover of darkness, that he has planned the order of battle, that he has found the right man and the right minute for the onslaught. The ostensible leader is to be Lafayette, Napoleon's tragical and almost grotesque adversary. Returning to France a quarter of a century earlier as one of the heroes of the American War of Independence, a youthful nobleman but crowned already with the glory of two hemispheres, enthusiast for the revolution, pioneer of the new ideas, darling of the people, Lafayette had early, all too early, known the ecstasy of power. Then, from nowhere, from Barras's bedchamber, the little Corsican had come, a lieutenant with a threadbare cloak and shoes down at the heels, to monopolize within a couple of years all that Lafayette had begun to build, robbing him of place and fame. Such ill turns are not to be forgotten. The mortified nobleman stays discontentedly at his country house, while Napoleon, in the

ermine of empire, receives the homage of the princes of Europe, and replaces the despotism of birth by the despotism of genius. No ray of favour shines from this rising sun into the remote provincial mansion; and when the Marquis of Lafayette once comes to Paris simply attired, the upstart scarcely notices him, for the generals and the field-marshals, in their dazzling uniforms and with their names reeking of carnage, completely outshine Lafayette's already paling reputation. Lafayette is forgotten, and nobody mentions him for twenty years. His hair is grizzled; his figure, once so imposing, is withered and shrunken; no one calls him to the army or to the senate; let him plant roses and hoe potatoes at La Grange. But an ambitious man does not forget such slights. And when, in 1815, the people, remembering the revolution, once more chooses its former favourite as representative, and Napoleon is compelled to address him, Lafayette is cold and reserved, being too proud, too honest, too upright, to conceal his enmity.

Now, pushed forward by Fouché, he plays a conspicuous part, long-repressed hatred working in him to produce a semblance of shrewdness and energy. The old banner-bearer again mounts the rostrum: "When, after so many years, I lift up a voice which the old friends of liberty will recognize, I feel impelled to speak to you of the dangers to which our country is exposed, that country whose rescue now depends upon you alone." The word liberty has been spoken aloud once more, and at this juncture liberty means getting free from Napoleon. Lafayette moves that the Chambers shall sit in perma-

nent session and shall declare any attempt at dissolution an act of high treason, thus barring the way to a coup d'état. The proposal is enthusiastically accepted.

There can be no mistake about who is aimed at in the resolution, and to Napoleon it comes as a slap in the face. "I ought to have sent these people packing before I left for the front," he says angrily. "Now it is too late." It is not really too late, there is still a way open to him. With a stroke of the pen, by signing an abdication, he could save the imperial crown for his son, and could safeguard his own freedom. Or, as an alternative, he need merely walk a thousand paces from the Elysée, make his way into the hall of assembly, and there, by his mere presence, enforce his will upon men hardly more steadfast than a flock of sheep. But again and again in history we encounter the same amazing phenomenon, that a climax, a turning-point, comes in the career of the most energetic when they succumb to a strange irresolution, to a sort of paralysis of the soul. Wallenstein just before deciding to go over to the enemy, Robespierre during the night of the ninth Thermidor, and not least the leaders in the late war, one and all these men showed disastrous irresolution when undue haste would have been a less flagrant error. Napoleon talks vaguely, discusses at large, before his ministers, who listen to him indifferently; he deliberates aloud during the hour which is to decide his future; ignoring the errors of his past, he utters complaints, he speculates, he is theatrical and emotional: but the one thing he cannot find in himself is courage. He talks, but does not act.

As if history could repeat itself within a man's lifetime, as if analogies could be anything but the most dangerous fallacies in politics, instead of going himself to the Chambers, he sends just as he did on the Eighteenth Brumaire his brother Lucien to win over the deputies. The situation is very different now! On the Eighteenth Brumaire, Lucien, as a skilled orator, was backing up his brother the conqueror, and Napoleon had hard-fisted grenadiers and resolute generals as confederates. Besides, Napoleon has forgotten a momentous fact, that during these fifteen years his wars have cost ten million lives. Now, when Lucien accuses the French nation of ungratefully leaving his brother in the lurch, the anger of disillusioned France against the slaughterer of Frenchmen breaks forth through Lafayette in ever-memorable words, which, like sparks falling into an open powder-barrel, in an instant blow Napoleon's last hope to fragments: "What," he thunders, "you dare to reproach us with not having done enough for your brother! Have you forgotten that the bones of our brothers and our sons bear witness everywhere to our loyalty? In the sandy deserts of Africa, on the banks of the Guadalquivir and the Tagus, beside the Vistula and on the icy plains of Russia, during the last ten or twelve years three million Frenchman have perished for the sake of this one man! For a man who today still wishes us to shed our blood fighting against Europe. We have done enough for him; our duty is to save our country." The thunders of applause with which this speech is greeted might, one would think, teach Napoleon that it is time for him to

abdicate. But nothing seems to be a harder sacrifice than the voluntary renunciation of power. Napoleon hesitates. This hesitation costs his son the imperial succession, and himself his freedom.

Fouché loses patience. If the man will not quit of his own free will, he must be forcibly dislodged. Given the right fulcrum, and a lever will overthrow even so huge a colossus. During the night he works upon the minds of the deputies most subject to his influence, and next morning the Chambers imperiously insist upon Napoleon's abdication. Even this is not a plain enough hint for one whose craving for power is so overwhelming. He continues to hold parley in one direction and another, until, moved once more by Fouché, Lafayette utters the decisive words: "If the abdication is postponed any longer, I shall propose his deposition."

They give the master of the world an hour in which to make up his mind, an hour in which it is still open to him to withdraw honourably from his position, an hour for the final renunciation. He uses it just as he did in the previous year when surrounded by his generals at Fontainebleau, to make theatrical demonstrations instead of to gain political ends. "What," he indignantly exclaims, "force? I will not abdicate before the threat of force. The Chamber is only a mob of Jacobins and ambitious fellows whom I ought to have denounced to the nation and chased back to their homes! But the time which I have lost can be recovered." What he really wants is a yet more urgent solicitation, so that the sacrifice may be

intensified; and in actual fact, just as in 1814, those around him respectfully urge him to abdicate. At Fontainebleau it was the generals, now it is his ministers. Only Fouché is silent. Pitilessly the alloted hour moves on towards its close. At length the Emperor looks at Fouché—a glance, eye-witnesses tell us, at once mocking and filled with passionate hate. "Write to these gentlemen," he says with a snarl; "tell them to be easy, they are going to have their way." Thereupon Fouché scribbles two or three lines to his wirepuller in the Chamber, saying that Napoleon is going of his own accord, and therefore need not be kicked out. Napoleon withdraws to a back room and dictates the abdication to his brother Lucien.

In a few minutes he returns. To whom will he give this weighty document? With crowning irony, he gives it to the man who has forced abdication upon him, and now stands motionless, waiting like Hermes, the inexorable messenger. Without a word, the Emperor hands him the paper. Without a word Fouché receives the document obtained through so arduous a struggle, and bows.

This was his last obeisance to Napoleon.

Hitherto, Fouché, Duke of Otranto, has not attended the sittings of the Chamber. Now, when his victory is assured, he enters, going slowly up the steps, carrying the famous act of abdication in his hand. He may well walk proudly, for he has again achieved a conquest over the strongest man in France, and this twenty-second of June is for him a repetition of the ninth Thermidor.

There is an awesome silence while he speaks, himself cold and unmoved, as he utters a few words of farewell on behalf of his sometime master, casting artificial flowers upon a new-made grave. After that, there is to be no trace of sentiment! He has not wrested power from this titan's grasp in order to leave it lying on the ground for anyone to pick up. His business is to seize it for himself, to turn to the best account a minute for which he has been longing throughout many years. He proposes, therefore, that a provisional government shall at once be appointed, a Directory of five elected—feeling assured that he himself will be one of the chosen. Once more, however, there seems to be a risk that the independence he has craved for will slip from his hands. He succeeds, indeed, in jockeying Lafayette out of the chance of election, Lafayette, his most dangerous competitor, the man whose uprightness and republican conviction have just done yeoman's service; but in the first ballot Carnot receives 324 votes while Fouché comes second with only 293, so that the presidency of the provisional government will naturally accrue to Carnot.

But in this decisive moment, when he is only an inch from the goal, Fouché, the skilful gamester, plays one of the most successful and most shameless of his tricks. If Carnot becomes president of the new Directory, Fouché will be no more than second man in the government, but he aspires to be at length ruler-in-chief. He therefore devises a cunning expedient. As soon as the Council of Five assembles and Carnot is about to seat himself in the presidential chair, Fouché stops him by proposing, as if

it were a matter of course, that they should begin by constituting themselves. "Constitute ourselves? What do you mean by that?" inquires the astonished Carnot. "I mean," rejoins Fouché innocently, "that it is necessary for us to elect our chairman and our secretary." Then, with spurious modesty, he adds: "I need hardly tell you that I shall vote for you as president." Carnot lets himself be bluffed, and answers politely: "And I for you." But two of the members of the Council are Fouché's men, so Fouché gets three votes against Carnot's two, and seats himself in the chair before Carnot has time to realize that he has been tricked. After Napoleon and Lafayette, Carnot has been outgeneralled, so that, instead of the most popular man, the craftiest becomes lord of the destinies of France. Within five days, from June 13th to 18th, the Emperor has fallen from power; and within five days, from June 17th to 22nd, Fouché has risen to power. He is no longer a servant. At last he is unchallenged ruler of the country; he is free, divinely free, to play the entrancing game of world politics.

His first measure is to get the Emperor cleared from his path. Even the shadow of a Napoleon is harassing to a Fouché. Just as Napoleon when Emperor did not feel at ease so long as the incalculable Fouché was still in Paris, so Fouché, as head of the provisional government, cannot breathe freely until there is a great gulf fixed between himself and the grey mantle. No personal interview with the fallen chief! Why bother about senti-

ment? The new ruler sends the recent ruler nothing but orders—thinly veiled, at first, in kindly phrases. But soon he omits the wrapping of benevolence, and ruthlessly makes Napoleon taste the sting of powerlessness. When the ex-Emperor writes an emotionally worded farewell proclamation to the army, Fouché throws it into the waste-paper basket, and Napoleon looks for it vainly next morning in the "Moniteur." Fouché has suppressed it! Fouché has muzzled the Emperor! Napoleon finds it difficult to credit his own senses, finds it almost impossible to believe that this sometime servant of his can presume thus to dictate to him; but the pressure of the hard hand is convincing, is irresistible, so ere long he removes to Malmaison. There he digs himself in for a few days. He does not want to leave, though the dragoons of Blücher's army are already close at hand, and from hour to hour Fouché is sending him more and more strenuous admonitions to the effect that it is time for him to be reasonable and depart. But, though the stern reality of his fall has come home to him, he clings ever more convulsively to power. Finally, when the travelling carriage stands ready in the courtyard, he makes an imposing gesture. He, the Emperor, offers to set himself at the head of the French army as plain General Bonaparte, and as such to conquer or to die. But Fouché, being sober-minded, refuses to take this romantic proposal seriously. "Is the man trying to make fun of us?" he angrily exclaims. "His presence at the head of the army would be a new challenge to Europe, and Napoleon's character is not one that inclines us to

regard him as indifferent to power." General Becker, who has brought the message, is told that he should have had better sense than to submit it when he ought to have been speeding the Emperor's departure, and he is sent back to Malmaison to see to this as his main business. To Napoleon himself no answer is vouchsafed. Fouché does not waste ink on the defeated.

Now he is free, now he has reached the goal. Having got rid of Napoleon, Joseph Fouché, Duke of Otranto, in his fifty-sixth year, is at length able to wield supreme power. A marvellous career he has had of it through this quarter of a century. The merchant's son becomes a tonsured seminary teacher; then tribune of the people and proconsul; then Duke of Otranto and servant of an emperor; and now he is no man's servant, but the ruler of France. Intrigue has triumphed over ideals, shrewdness over genius. He has survived while a whole generation of men destined for immortal fame has gone down into the tomb or vanished into obscurity. Mirabeau dies, Marat is murdered; Robespierre, Desmoulins, and Danton perish under the guillotine; Collot d'Herbois, his associate in Lyons, is transported to the fever-stricken penal settlement of Guiana; Lafayette is removed from his path; his comrades of the revolution are dead or of no account. While he, the chosen of all parties, presides over the destinies of France, Napoleon, for years the lord of the world, is fleeing towards the coast, pitifully disguised, and provided with a false passport as secretary to a minor general; Ney and Murat will have to face

firing-squads before the year is out; the other Bonapartes, kings and queens by Napoleon's grace, wander in penury from hiding-place to hiding-place. While these others sink, he alone rises, thanks to his power of planning in the dark and of burrowing underground, thanks to his invincible patience. The ministers of State and the members of the Upper and Lower Houses bow and scrape before him; the generals, usually so masterful, but trembling now for their pensions, humble themselves to win the favour of the new president; the whole nation is hanging on his words. Louis XVIII sends him messengers; Talleyrand, greetings; Wellington the victor at Waterloo, confidential information. The threads of destiny are passing freely and openly through his fingers.

An overwhelmingly important, an immensurably great task awaits him. He has to protect a conquered country from being devastated by invading armies, to prevent futile attempts at resistance, to secure peace on easy terms, to inaugurate the best form of State and to install the best possible ruler, to create out of chaos a new system and a lasting order. This demands masterly skill, great suppleness of mind; and, in actual fact, when all others are at their wits' end, Fouché displays the utmost energy, and his multifarious plans are drafted with an amazingly sure touch. He is friendly to every one, that he may lead them all by the nose, be free to do exactly what seems to him most expedient and most likely to be useful. Although to the Chambers he appears to favour Napoleon's son, to Carnot the Republic, and to the Allies the Duke of Orleans, in reality he is inconspicu-

ously steering towards a second restoration of King Louis XVIII. Without revealing this aim even to his most intimate associates, he adroitly changes his course; and, while in the ministerial council and in parliament he is still playing the Bonapartist and the republican, he has really, paddling through a mire of corruption, already got into touch with the royalists, and has traded over to the Bourbons the government with which he has been entrusted. Psychologically considered, his solution is the only right one. Nothing but a prompt capitulation to the King can secure rest, protection, and an easy transition for France, bleeding from a thousand wounds and trampled under foot by foreign troops. Fouché, the realist, alone understands the necessities of the situation, and acts on his knowledge, getting his own way despite the opposition of the ministerial council, parliament, the army, and the people.

During these days he exhibits every kind of ability but one—the last, the highest, the sublimest of them all. Therein lies the tragedy of the man! He cannot forget himself, cannot forgo his own advantage for the sake of the cause. After such a masterstroke, when he was six-and-fifty years of age, at the climax of success, a multimillionaire, honoured by his contemporaries and a great figure upon the stage of history, this ultimate wisdom would have led him to renunciation. But one who for twenty years has lusted after power, who for twenty years has fed on power without being satiated, cannot bring himself to renounce power. Like Napoleon, Fouché will not drop the reins until he has been dragged out of

the saddle. Since he no longer has a master to betray, there is no one left for him to be unfaithful to but himself, his own past. To restore conquered France to its former sovereign would at that juncture have been a great deed, would have been a sound and a bold policy. But to accept a gratuity for his services, to receive in payment a ministerial post under the restored monarch—that was base, was criminal, was a blunder. But this blunder Fouché now commits in his crazy ambition "to have his fingers in the pie" a little longer. It was his first great blunder, and it was an irremediable one, since it damned him for ever before the tribunal of history. Shrewdly, nimbly, patiently, he climbs a thousand steps, and then, through a single maladroit and needless genuflexion, he falls headlong to the bottom of the long staircase.

How this sale of the government to Louis XVIII in exchange for a ministerial post came about, is luckily recorded in a characteristic document, one of the very few which have handed down to posterity a verbatim account of one of Fouché's diplomatic conversations. (This adroit schemer was usually able to avoid leaving such inconvenient traces!) During the Hundred Days, the only royalist leader steadfast enough to attempt armed resistance to the Emperor had been Baron de Vitrolles. When he was captured and brought to Paris, the Emperor was for shooting him out of hand; but Fouché, always inclined to show mercy towards an enemy who might be useful to him later, had intervened on his behalf. Pend-

ing trial by court martial, Vitrolles was confined in a fortress. On June 23rd, however, the Baroness of Vitrolles, immediately she was informed that Fouché had become ruler of France, hastened to him and begged that her husband might be set at liberty. Fouché complied instantly, for it was important to win friends in the Bourbon camp. Next day, Baron de Vitrolles, the freed royalist leader, called to thank the Duke of Otranto. A conversation ensued, which ran as follows:

Fouché: "Well, what do you think of doing?" Vitrolles: "I shall make my way to Ghent. I have a post-chaise waiting below." Fouché: "That's certainly your wisest course. You would not be safe here." Vitrolles: "Have you nothing to give me for the King?" Fouché: "Oh, no, nothing. But you might tell His Majesty that he can count on my devotion, and that if it depended on me he would soon be back in the Tuileries." Vitrolles: "But, as far as I can see, it does depend on you whether he gets back soon." Fouché: "Not so much as you think. There are great difficulties. But the Chamber has clarified the situation. You know, I suppose," he continues with a smile, "that the Chamber has proclaimed Napoleon II?" Vitrolles: "What? Napoleon II?" Fouché: "Certainly! It was necessary to take that step." Vitrolles: "Still, I suppose it need hardly be considered seriously?" Fouché: "You understate the case. The more I think the matter over, the more confident I am that there is no sense in it. But you would find it hard to believe how many people there are who set great store by that name.

Several of my colleagues, and especially Carnot, are convinced that with Napoleon II we can save the situation." Vitrolles: "How long will this farce last?" Fouché: "Probably for so long as we shall need it in order to rid ourselves of Napoleon I." Vitrolles: "What will you do then?" Fouché: "I hardly know. In times like these it is always difficult to say what will happen on the morrow." Vitrolles: "But if your colleague Monsieur Carnot thinks it so important to have Napoleon II on the throne, it may be less easy than you suppose to prevent that consummation." Fouché: "Nonsense! You don't know Carnot. If we want to make him change his mind, it will be enough to proclaim the 'French people.' The French people! What a joke!" The two men laugh heartily, the royalist emissary and the Duke of Otranto, the latter elected by republican votes, and now mocking at his republican colleague Carnot. The pair are beginning to understand one another very well. When the merry interlude is over, serious conversation is resumed. Vitrolles: "An excellent idea! But I hope that, when you have done with Napoleon II and the French people, you will give a thought to the Bourbons?" Fouché: "Why, of course. Then will come the turn of the Duke of Orleans." Vitrolles: "What? The Duke of Orleans? Do you imagine for a moment that the King would ever deign to accept a crown that had been bandied about in such a way?" Fouché holds his peace, and smiles enigmatically.

But the Baron de Vitrolles has grasped the situation. By ironical reserve, by a plausible assumption of indif-

ference, Fouché has really shown his hand. He has intimated to Vitrolles, without saying it in so many words, that he, Fouché, can make difficulties; that it rests with him, Fouché, to get Napoleon II or the French people or the Duke of Orleans proclaimed supreme, should he be so disposed; but that he is not particularly interested in doing so, and would be prepared to give all three of these rivals the go-by in favour of King Louis, if only . . . The "if" is not uttered, but is conveyed to Baron de Vitrolles by a meaning curve of the lip, or perhaps by a wave of the hand. At any rate Vitrolles changes his mind about the journey to Ghent. He will stay in Paris, where he can keep in close touch with Fouché—provided only that he may be able to correspond with Louis XVIII. He states his conditions. First of all he must have five-and-twenty passes for his agents, that they may go freely to Ghent, the King's headquarters. "You can have fifty, a hundred, as many as you please," rejoins the ostensibly republican Minister of Police to this representative of the adversary of the Republic. Then Vitrolles states his other requisite: "I should also like to be allowed to see you once a day." The Duke answers cheerfully: "Once a day will not be enough. Come here every morning and every evening." Now the Baron de Vitrolles can stay in Paris and correspond with the King under the protection of the Duke of Otranto; can tell his master that the gates of Paris are open, if only . . . if, to put the dots on the i's, King Louis will make Joseph Fouché one of his ministers in the new government.

When Louis XVIII is advised to ease the opening of the gates of Paris by bestowing a portfolio on Fouché, the Bourbon ruler, usually phlegmatic, is furious. "Never!" he exclaims to those who venture the proposal. It does, indeed, seem preposterous to ask him to make this man one of his own trusted servants—the regicide, the atheist, the henchman of Napoleon. Give office to his brother's murderer? But we all know the significance of "never" in the mouths of kings, generals, and politicians; the word is in most cases a feeler towards capitulation. "Paris is worth a mass!" Did not his most famous ancestor King Henry IV deem it worth while to shelve reason and conscience in order to mount the throne of France? Urged from all sides—by his courtiers, by his generals, by Wellington, and especially by Talleyrand (whose presence, as a married bishop, at this court had been still harder to swallow)—Louis XVIII wavers in his determination. They combine to assure him that no one but Fouché can open the gates of Paris. Fouché only, the man of all parties and moods, the man who holds the stirrup for every aspirant to the throne, can prevent the otherwise inevitable bloodshed. Besides, the ex-Jacobin has long since become a good conservative, he has seen the error of his ways and has betrayed Napoleon in fine style. At length the King gives way. With an uneasy conscience and a heartfelt sigh ("My poor brother, could you but see me you would forgive me!" he is said to have exclaimed), he agrees to give Fouché audience at Neuilly. The meeting is to be secret, for no one in Paris must suspect that an elected leader of the people is sell-

ing his country for a ministerial post and that a would-be king is bartering away his honour for a crown. After dark, and with only the sometime Bishop of Autun as witness, this most shameless deal in modern history is brought to a conclusion.

We can picture to ourselves the scene, sinister and fantastic, worthy of delineation by Shakespeare or Pietro Aretino. The descendant of Louis IX receives the man who was one of the slayers of his own brother, receives Fouché, the minister of the Convention and the Emperor and the Republic, that this sevenfold perjurer may take his eighth oath of fealty. Talleyrand, likewise a man of many changes (from bishop to republican, from republican to minister of the Emperor, and from that to servitor of the King), introduces his mate to the new master. Being lame, that he may walk the better he rests his arm on Fouché's shoulder. In this wise ("vice supported by crime," as Chateaubriand mockingly phrases it), the two atheists, the two arch-opportunists, fraternally approach the successor of St. Louis. A profound obeisance. The regicide is even paler than his wont as he bends the knee before the "tyrant"; as he kisses the "despot's" hand; as he takes the oath in the name of the God whose churches he had plundered and desecrated. It is a sharp curve, even for a Fouché.

That is why he looks yet paler than usual, does the Duke of Otranto, when he leaves the King's audience chamber; and that is why it is rather the limping Talleyrand who must now support him than he Talleyrand. Fouché says nothing. Not even the sarcasms of the

shamelessly cynical ex-bishop, who in his ecclesiastical days had read mass as irreverently as he would play a game of cards, can rouse him out of his brooding silence. Late that evening, the warrant for his appointment as King Louis's minister in his pocket, he drives back to the Tuileries and joins his unsuspecting colleagues, whom on the morrow he will eject, and the day after will outlaw. Even he, thick-skinned though he be, must feel the position rather uncomfortable. For a little while this most unfaithful of servants has been a free man, has been his own master, but now destiny has had its way with him. Subaltern souls cannot endure freedom, and are impelled by an irresistible urge to return to thraldom. Fouché, therefore, yesterday strong and independent, bows today before a new master; once more he chains himself to the rower's bench in the galley of power. Ere long, too, he will bear the galley-slave's brand.

Next morning the allied troops enter Paris. In accordance with the secret understanding, the Tuileries is occupied in force and the deputies are barred within the hall of assembly. Fouché, assuming surprise and indignation, thereupon moves that, in protest against the bayonets of the invaders, parliament shall drop the reins of government. The simpletons are pleased with the idea of this pathetic demonstration, and fall into the trap. Thus (as had been agreed) the throne is vacated, and that day there is no government in France. When Louis XVIII draws near the gates of the city, the populace, bribed for the occasion by the new Minister of

Police, greets him as a saviour. Once more France is a monarchy.

Now Fouché's colleagues realize how they have been fooled, and when they read the next issue of the "Moniteur" they learn what Fouché has been paid for his treason. Carnot, honest, faithful to his convictions, unbribable—though perhaps not overburdened with intelligence—flames up in wrath. "Traitor, where am I to go now?" he scornfully asks the new-made royalist Minister of Police. "Wherever you please, idiot," answers Fouché, no less contemptuously.

With this laconic dialogue between the two ex-Jacobins (the last of the stalwarts of the ninth Thermidor), the curtain is rung down on the most amazing drama of modern times— the sparkling phantasmagoria of the revolution and Napoleon's imposing march across the stage of history. The epoch of heroic adventure is finished, and the humdrum bourgeois era has begun.

CHAPTER NINE

FALL AND DEATH

1815 – 1820

On July 28, 1815, the Hundred Days of the Napoleonic interlude being over, King Louis XVIII re-enters Paris, driving in a State chariot drawn by white horses. He has a great reception, for Fouché has worked hard. Jubilant crowds line the thoroughfare; white banners wave from the windows; and where fleur-de-lis are not forthcoming, tablecloths and sheets attached to walking-sticks make a passable substitute. In the evening, there are illuminations, and, in excess of joy, Frenchwomen dance with the officers of the Anglo-Prussian army of occupation. No hostility is shown towards the foreign soldiery; so the French gendarmerie, turned out in force to keep order in case of need, has an easy time of it. Joseph Fouché, Minister of Police to the Most Christian King, has done wonders on behalf of his new master. In the Tuileries, the very palace where a month before he had been among the most faithful servitors of Emperor Napoleon, the Duke of Otranto is now waiting upon King Louis XVIII, brother of the "tyrant" whom his vote here two-and-twenty years earlier had helped to slay. But now he makes a deep obeisance before the heir of St. Louis; and in his letters to the King he subscribes him-

self "with reverence Your Majesty's most loyal and most devoted subject"—as can be seen in a dozen holograph documents. Of all his acrobatic leaps from one position to another, this is his boldest and most amazing, but his present performance upon the political tightrope is destined to be his last.

At first, indeed, everything seems to be going well with him. The King is not yet firmly seated upon the throne, and therefore has a use for Monsieur Fouché, for this Figaro, this skilful trickster. The elections have to be gerrymandered, for King Louis must be able to control a good majority in the people's parliament, and who can make the necessary arrangements more efficiently than the "trusty" republican and man of the people? Besides, there are various unpleasant jobs still to be done, jobs that will leave blood-stains on the hand that does them. Why not do them through Fouché's instrumentality, and then discard the soiled glove? Thus His Majesty will be able to keep his own royal fingers clean.

One such disagreeable piece of work needs doing in the opening period of the second Restoration. During the Hundred Days, while in exile, the King had solemnly promised to grant an amnesty, and to take no vindictive steps against any who should have entered the usurper's service. But after dinner the aspect of things changes, and rarely does a monarch feel bound by the pledges he made when only a pretender. Now that the King is in the saddle once more, the vengeful royalists, pluming themselves on their own fidelity, are

clamoring for the punishment of persons who fell away when Napoleon got back from Elba. Hard-pressed by the true-blues who are always more royalist than their ruler, Louis at length gives way. Now, therefore, it becomes the painful duty of the Minister of Police to compile the desired proscription list.

The Duke of Otranto finds it a distasteful commission. Are people really to be punished for such a trifle? Are they to be punished for having had the good sense to join the stronger party, for having gone over to the victor? Furthermore, the Minister of Police to the Most Christian King cannot but realize that the first name on such a list ought to be that of the man who was Minister of Police under Napoleon during the Hundred Days—the name of Joseph Fouché, Duke of Otranto. A painful duty indeed! He tries by a crafty manœuvre to evade it. Instead of compiling a list containing, as expected, the names of only thirty or forty of the most heinous offenders, he brings along two folio pages on which are inscribed at least ten times that number (according to some accounts, twenty pages); and he demands that all these shall be punished, or none at all. His hope is that the King, lacking courage for such wholesale proceedings, will return to his idea of a general amnesty. But, alas, the president of the ministry is just such another fox as himself. Talleyrand, perceiving that the pill is a bitter one and that it sticks in friend Fouché's gizzard, is determined to make him swallow it. Inexorably he goes through the list, erasing name after name until barely

four dozen are left of those marked for death and banishment. Then he hands it back for the Minister of Police to sign and execute.

Obviously the best course for Fouché now would be to resign. But again and again we have had occasion to note the man's weak point. Ambition makes him shrewd, but deprives him of the faculty for doing that which is at times the shrewdest thing. He is incapable of renunciation. He will rather incur universal odium than voluntarily throw up his portfolio. To the general indignation, therefore, there is now published a proscription list containing the noblest names in France and signed by the ex-Jacobin. It includes the name of Carnot, "l'organisateur de la victoire," the creator of the Republic; that of Marshal Ney, the victor in numberless battles, the saviour of the remnants of the Grand Army in Russia; those of the signatory's comrades in the provisional government, his remaining comrades from the Convention, his comrades of the days of the revolution. All the names in this terrible list are the names of men whose deeds during the last two decades have brought glory to France. Only one name is lacking, that of Joseph Fouché, Duke of Otranto.

Or, rather, that name is not lacking. But it appears on the document, not as the name of one of the proscribed ministers of Napoleon the Emperor, but as the name of a minister of King Louis; as the name of the man who is sending his own comrades to death or to exile; as the name of the executioner.

With this self-humiliation, the ex-Jacobin is dealing out rough measure to what passes for his conscience, so King Louis owes him a recompense. Now, therefore, Joseph Fouché, Duke of Otranto, receives a high honour, a supreme mark of favour. Having been a widower for several years, he has decided upon a second marriage; and the man who once thirsted for "aristocrats' blood" has determined, as the crown of his career, to wed a lady belonging to the old nobility, a certain Countess Castellane, a member "of that criminal gang which must fall beneath the sword of the law"—'twas thus he had phrased it twenty-odd years before in Nevers. Since then, however, the Jacobinissimus of former days, Joseph Fouché the blood-drinker, has modified his views considerably; and if on August 1st he goes to church, this is not as it had been in 1793 in order to break up with a hammer crucifixes and altars (the "shameful emblems of fanaticism"), but in order with his blue-blooded bride to seek episcopal blessing from a man wearing one of those mitres which in 1793 he had mockingly clapped down over a donkey's ears. Furthermore, in accordance with the ancient usages of the nobility—a Duke of Otranto knows what is seemly when he is espousing a Countess of Castellane—the wedding contract is signed by leading persons of high degree. As the first of the sign-manuals of distinguished onlookers appears that of Louis XVIII, who, in putting his name as worthiest and unworthiest witness to the marriage lines of his brother's murderer, helps to create a document unparalleled in history.

Fouché has worked a miracle. Perhaps too great a miracle! For this last piece of impudence, that the "regicide" should ask the brother of the guillotined King to act as chief witness at his wedding, arouses intense indignation among the nobles. This pitiful interloper and turncoat, this royalist of the day before yesterday, is behaving as if he really belonged to the court and to the nobility! After all, is he of any further use, this man, "le plus dégoûtant reste de la révolution," who besmirches the ministry with his repulsive presence? No doubt he helped to bring the King back to Paris, and he used his venal hand to consign some of the best men in France to perdition; but that is over and done with, and now away with him! The very same aristocrats, who, while the King was impatiently waiting outside the gates of Paris, had urged him to appoint the Duke of Otranto to the ministry as the only way of getting to the capital without bloodshed—these very same aristocrats refuse, now, to recognize the Duke of Otranto. They can only recall a certain Joseph Fouché, who in Lyons had had hundreds of priests and noblemen shot down and had in the Convention voted for the death of Louis XVI. The Duke of Otranto becomes aware that when he makes his way through the King's anteroom, many of the courtiers cut him dead, or contemptuously turn their backs on him. Lampoons against the "mitrailleur de Lyon" pass from hand to hand. A newly formed patriotic society, the "Francs régénérés," the forerunner of the "Camelots du Roi" and a prototype of "Awakening Hungary," holds meetings, and bluntly demands

that the fleur-de-lis shall be cleansed from this stain.

But Fouché will not surrender power without fighting for it. In the report of a spy set to watch him during these days, we read that he was seeking support on all hands. The foreign sovereigns are still in the country, and they will be able to defend him against the unduly royalist servants of King Louis. He calls on the Tsar of Russia; has daily conversations with Wellington and the British ambassador; has recourse to various diplomatic wiles, trying to win over the people by encouraging them in their sense of grievance against the occupying armies, and at the same time alarming the King by exaggerated reports concerning the temper of the masses. He actually induces the victor of Waterloo to plead his cause with King Louis XVIII; he mobilizes bankers, women, and his last remaining friends. He will not relinquish his post. He has paid a heavy price for it, and it is natural that he should cling to it desperately. For several weeks, like a skilful swimmer changing his stroke from time to time, he manages to keep his head above the political waters. From the aforesaid spy we learn that, throughout all this time, he shows a confident mien, and it is probable that his self-assurance is genuine. Amid the vicissitudes of the last quarter of a century he has always managed to get the better of his adversaries. Surely one who has fought and vanquished a Napoleon and a Robespierre, has no occasion to fear a few aristocratic simpletons! The old cynic who has outfought and outlived some of the greatest men in history, thinks he has no occasion to fear any man.

But there is one thing which this veteran condottiere, this man of much experience, has not yet learned, for no one can learn it—how to fight ghosts. He has forgotten one thing, that at the royal court there walks like a vengeful spectre from the past, the Duchess of Angoulême, daughter of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the only one of the family who escaped the great massacre. King Louis XVIII might forgive Fouché, remembering that he owes this Jacobin his throne. The knowledge might well soften his enmity toward the regicide. It was easy enough for him to forgive, since he had had no personal experience of the days of the Terror; but the Duchess of Angoulême had memories of the kind no one can forget, and had been inspired with feelings of hatred of the kind that last a lifetime. She had suffered too much in her own body and her own soul to pardon this Jacobin, this man of the Terror. As a young girl, she had been in the palace of Saint-Cloud on that dreadful evening when the sansculottes had murdered the doorkeeper, and had, shoes dripping blood, forced their way into her parents' presence. Then had come the evening when, four of them in the carriage, her father, her mother, her brother, and herself—"the master baker, the baker's wife, and the baker's children"—amid a jeering crowd and in peril of death from moment to moment, they had been driven back to Paris, back to the Tuileries. She had been there on the tenth of August, when the mob, armed with axes, had burst open the doors of her mother's room, when they had mockingly set the red cap on her father's head and had threatened his

breast with a pike. She had been through the frightful days in prison at the Temple, and the horrible minute when the severed head of her mother's friend the Princess of Lamballe had been thrust in at the window on the end of a spear. How could she forget the evening when she had said farewell to her father, about to go to the guillotine, and farewell to her brother, who was to be confined in a narrow dungeon, there to waste away to his death? Was she likely to forget how some of Fouché's red-capped comrades had urged her day after day to bear witness to the alleged incestuous relations between her mother Marie Antoinette and her brother the little prince? Could she forget that her mother had been torn from her arms in order to be driven in the rattling tumbril to the guillotine? Louis XVIII had read of these horrors in the newspapers, or heard of them at second hand; but for the daughter of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, they had been branded into her very being and lived on as scars in her tortured soul. Her hatred for the murderers of her father, the tormentors of her mother, her loathing of all Jacobins and revolutionists, was as intense as ever, and still unmitigated by revenge.

The Duchess of Angoulême has sworn that she will never extend her hand to Fouché, one of the slayers of her father, and now minister of her uncle. Never will she breathe the air of the same room. She shows her contempt and hatred for him openly and challengingly before the whole court. She will not attend any festival at which this regicide, this traitor to his own convictions,

is present; and her fanatical detestation of the turncoat proves contagious. At length the members of the royal family combine to urge Louis XVIII, now that his power is assured, to drive his brother's murderer forth from the Tuileries in disgrace.

It will be remembered that Louis had been reluctant to accept Joseph Fouché as one of his ministers, and had only done so because the man seemed indispensable. Gladly, therefore, does he now rid himself of one who has ceased to be of use. "The poor duchess shall no longer be exposed to the risk of having to encounter this repulsive creature," he says smilingly of the minister who is still signing himself His Majesty's "most faithful servant." The other turncoat, Talleyrand, is therefore instructed to make it clear to Fouché (comrade from the days of the Convention and of the Empire) that he is no longer a persona grata in the Tuileries.

Talleyrand glady accepts the commission. He himself does not find it easy to trim his sails to the stiff royalist breeze which is now blowing. It will help him to navigate his own ship better if he can throw some ballast overboard. But the heaviest ballast in his ministry is this regicide, his old companion Fouché. Painful as the duty of jettisoning Fouché may seem, Talleyrand performs it with the ability and grace of a polished man of the world. He does not bluntly tell his colleague to clear out, does not give him plain notice to quit. Far from it, as a skilled master of the ceremonies, as a distinguished nobleman, he chooses a delightful way of

making Monsieur Fouché understand that closing-time has struck. The last of the eighteenth-century aristocrats is always fond of staging his comedies and conducting his intrigues in the drawing-room, and this time he conveys the disagreeable intimation in the most courtly manner possible. On December 14th, Talleyrand and Fouché meet one another at an evening party. They have supper together and converse for a while, Talleyrand seeming to be in an exceptionally good humour. A circle forms round him. Pretty women, court dignitaries, and young folks as well—one and all eager to listen to this adept in the art of conversation. Tonight his talk is exceptionally charming. He speaks reminiscently of the days when, the Convention having issued an order for his arrest, he had fled across the Atlantic; and he dilates upon the United States of America. A splendid country! Impenetrable forests, inhabited by the primitive tribes of the redskins; unexplored rivers and lakes, the mighty Potomac, and the huge Lake Erie; and amid these heroic and romantic surroundings there is growing up a new race, people strong as steel, vigorous and efficient, hardened in many fights, sworn apostles of liberty, living under admirable laws—a place offering incomparable possibilities. Yes, there is still much to learn from them. There a new, a better life is in the making; a life far more worth living than is possible any longer in worn-out old Europe! That is the place to go to, he explains enthusiastically. That is the place for a man who likes work. What post could be more attractive than that of ambassador to the United States?

Suddenly, as if feeling that his enthusiasm is running away with him, he puts the curb on it, and turns to Fouché, saying: "Would not you find such a post congenial, Duke of Otranto?"

Fouché understands. He rages inwardly as he realizes how adroitly the old fox has, before every one, before the entire court, given him his congé as minister. He answers never a word; but in a few minutes he takes his leave, and, on reaching his study, writes his resignation. Talleyrand, in high fettle, outstays him at the soirée, and on the way home confides to a friend, smiling maliciously: "I have wrung his neck at last!"

That Fouché's blunt ejection may be decently veiled from the public, the dismissed minister is given another and comparatively unimportant office. Thus the "Moniteur," instead of announcing that Joseph Fouché, the "regicide," has been discharged from his post as Minister of Police, states that His Majesty King Louis XVIII has been graciously pleased to appoint His Excellency the Duke of Otranto ambassador to the court of Dresden. Naturally every one expects that he will refuse this appointment, which is accordant neither with his rank nor with his position as a statesman. Nothing of the kind happens! Had Fouché applied a minimum of common sense to the matter, he would have known that in a reactionary monarchy he was hopelessly damned by his record, and that after a few months even this poor bone of Dresden would be snatched out of his mouth. But the craving for power has reduced to the level of a

whipped cur the man who used to be as bold as a wolf. Just as Napoleon down to the last possible moment clung, not only to his position, but to the mere semblance of the imperial dignity, so, and far more ignobly, does Fouché cling to this preposterous sinecure of an ambassadorship. Sticking like wax to the last vestiges of power, he, as the eternal servant, though with the taste of gall in his mouth, obeys his master even on this occasion! At fifty-seven years of age, a millionaire twenty times over, he writes humbly to the man who six months earlier had become King again by his grace: "I thankfully accept, Sire, the embassy which Your Majesty has deigned to offer me as a retiring post." Packing his trunks, he removes with his family to the petty court of Dresden, establishes himself like a prince, and behaves as if he were going to spend the rest of his days there as King Louis's ambassador.

But what he has so long dreaded, soon happens. For wellnigh a quarter of a century, Fouché has been desperately opposing the restoration of the Bourbons, guided by a sound instinct, convinced that in the end they would make him pay his reckoning for those two words "la mort" with which he had helped to send Louis XVI to the guillotine. Nevertheless, of late, in his folly, he has been hoping to dupe them by entering their service, by dressing himself up as one of the King's liege men. This time, however, he has befooled not others, but himself. Hardly has he had his house at Dresden redecorated, hardly has he provided himself with beds and table-furniture, when the storm breaks in the French parlia-

ment. No one now speaks of the "Duke of Otranto," no one now remembers that a dignitary bearing this name had brought their new king Louis XVIII back in triumph to Paris: they all speak of a Monsieur Fouché, or of the "regicide" Joseph Fouché of Nantes, who in 1792 had sentenced the late King to death, of "le mitrailleur de Lyon." By the overwhelming majority of 334 votes to 32, the caitiff who "had lifted his hand against the Lord's anointed" is excluded from amnesty and banished from France for life. Of course this implies dismissal from his ambassadorial post. Ruthlessly and contemptuously Monsieur Fouché (no longer His Excellency, no longer Commander of the Legion of Honour, no longer senator, no longer minister of State, no longer a great dignitary) is kicked out into the street, and at the same time the King of Saxony is officially informed that it will be displeasing to France if Joseph Fouché is allowed by the Saxon government to remain in Dresden. He who has himself sent thousands into exile, is now—after twenty years of power, one of the last veterans of the Convention—homeless, execrated, and banished. Since he has become impotent, since he is an outlaw, the hatred of all parties is concentrated on the fallen magnate just as unanimously as the sympathy of all parties had accrued to him in the days of his power. No artifices, no protests, no adjurations, can help him any longer. He is that most pitiful thing on earth, a man fallen from power, a spent politician, an intriguer deprived of the possibility for intrigue. Though late, with usurious interest at last Fouché has to pay his debts—has to pay for never hav-

ing served an idea, for never having shown any enthusiasm for the welfare of mankind, for having always wooed the perishable favour of the moment and of his fellows.

Whither shall he betake himself? Though he is banished from France, this does not at first trouble the Duke of Otranto. Is he not the favourite of the Tsar, the confidant of Wellington, a friend of Metternich the all-powerful Austrian statesman? Are not the Bernadottes indebted to him for having set them on the throne of Sweden? Do not the rulers of Bavaria owe him thanks? Has he not for years been on terms of close intimacy with the stars of the diplomatic world? Have not most of the princes and kings of Europe eagerly sought his favour? A mere hint will suffice, he thinks, and then a number of countries will vie with one another for the privilege of sheltering the ostracized Aristides. But, like many another, he finds that the world's attitude towards a fallen man is very different from its attitude towards the same man while he was in power! Several hints to the court of the Tsar fail to produce an invitation. Our exile has no better success with Wellington. Brussels refuses to admit him; they have had enough of Jacobin refugees there. Bavaria begs to be excused. Even Prince Metternich is singularly cool. The Duke of Otranto will, indeed, be made welcome on Austrian territory, should he wish to come; the Austrian government will be magnanimous enough to offer no objection. But he must not come to Vienna, and Italy too will

be placed out of bounds. The most that can be allowed is that he should settle in some petty provincial town, but not in Lower Austria—nowhere near Vienna, that is to say. Elsewhere in Austria will be all right, provided the visitor behaves himself! Unquestionably old friend Metternich does not show himself pressing in his invitation. Nor does he relax even when the wealthy Duke of Otranto offers to invest his property in Austrian land or in the Austrian funds, and proposes that his son shall serve in the imperial army. And when the Duke desires to pay a visit to Vienna, he is met with a courteous refusal. He may go to Prague, he is told, but must do so privately, not making any parade of the matter.

Thus without any proper invitation, without any tokens of honour, tolerated rather than desired, does Joseph Fouché remove from Dresden to settle for a time in Prague. His fourth exile, the last and the most cruel one, has begun.

Prague does not show itself particularly well pleased at the honour. Specially do the members of the old Bohemian aristocracy turn the cold shoulder upon the newcomer. They read the French press, which is still full of fierce onslaughts upon "Monsieur" Fouché, giving detailed accounts of how this Jacobin in 1793 had plundered churches at Lyons and had emptied people's strong boxes at Nevers. All the penny-a-liners who used to tremble before the Minister of Police and had in those days to swallow their wrath, are spitting venom at the defenceless exile. The wheel has turned! He who used to keep watch over half the world is now himself kept

under close observation; the police methods elaborated by a genius at the trade are being turned by his pupils against their own master. The Duke of Otranto's letters, sent or received, pass through the "black cabinet," are opened and copied; police agents eavesdrop at his conversations and report them to the authorities; his comings and goings are spied upon; at every turn he feels that he is being watched. Vainly does he try to protect himself from these humiliations. He writes to King Louis XVIII, who is no more inclined to answer the fallen minister than Fouché was inclined to answer Napoleon the day after the Emperor's deposition. He writes to Prince Metternich, who vouchsafes no more than a curt answer at second hand through the pen of a subordinate official. He can do nothing but bear the lashings which every one inflicts on him; he may as well give up complaining and striving. The man who was only respected because he was feared, is despised by all when there is no longer occasion to fear him. The greatest of political intriguers has carried out his last intrigue.

During two and a half decades, this man slippery as an eel had again and again been able to elude the grasp of fate. But now, when he has been struck down once for all, he is subjected to a pitiless rain of blows. In Prague, Joseph Fouché—the private individual, no less than the politician—has his taste of Canossa. No novelist could have invented an incident to show the depth of his humiliation more vividly than does a little episode which

occurred there in 1817. It is one in which tragedy is intensified by ludicrousness. It is one in which the husband is humiliated as well as the politician. We are certainly justified in assuming that when a handsome woman of aristocratic birth and only twenty-six years of age married this hard-featured elderly widower, it was not for love. But in 1815 her unpleasing wooer was the second richest man in France, was His Excellency, was a duke, and was a highly respected minister of the Most Christian King. The pretty but impoverished countess from the provinces was allured by the hope that, if she married the Duke of Otranto, she would be able to shine at court festivals and in the Faubourg Saint-Germain among Frenchwomen of rank and fashion. At first her hope was justified by the result. His Majesty was graciously pleased to sign her marriage certificate as one of the chief witnesses; the lords and ladies of the court were profuse in their congratulations; a palace at the capital, two country houses, and a princely castle in Provence vied with one another for the honour of sheltering the Duchess of Otranto. For these splendours, and in order to become the wife of an exceedingly wealthy man, this ambitious woman had sold herself to an arid, withered, ill-favoured old stick of a husband, six-and-fifty years of age. But, as with those who sell themselves to the devil, what she had purchased turned to dust and ashes in her mouth. Hardly was the honeymoon over when she found herself the wife, not of a highly honoured minister of State, but of the most scorned and detested man in France, of "Monsieur" Fouché, who had been

hunted into exile, and was despised by the whole world. The ducal splendours had vanished into thin air, while the embittered and spiteful old man remained. It was not surprising, therefore, that in Prague his wife should enter into an "amitié amoureuse" with young Thibaudeau, the son of another exiled republican—concerning which we do not know to what extent it was only "amitié" and to what extent it was "amoureuse." At any rate it led to stormy scenes in the Fouché ménage. Fouché forbade Thibaudeau the house, and unfortunately the story of these conjugal disputes became public property. The royalist newspapers, always ready to seize a chance of castigating the man before whom they had trembled in the old days, published malicious paragraphs about his domestic troubles, and, to the delight of their readers, circulated a gross falsehood to the effect that the Duchess of Otranto had eloped with her lover. The Duke of Otranto, when he went out into society in Prague, could not fail to notice that the ladies of the company smiled meaningly when they looked at him, and were obviously engaged in ironical comparisons between his young and blooming wife and his own wintry form. The man whose business it had been to disseminate rumours, the man who had spent so many years of his life in collecting scandal, has now to learn on his own account how painful it is to be the victim of ill-natured reports; and to learn that in many cases there is no way of fighting such calumnies, but that the best thing to do is to run away from them. This misfortune it is which makes him recognize the full extent of his fall, and his exile in Prague

becomes a hell to him. He applies to Prince Metternich for permission to leave a place which has become intolerable to him, and to seek another habitat in Austria. He is kept waiting a good while, but at last is granted permission to go to Linz, whither he now betakes himself, humiliated, disappointed, and weary, that he may hide from the hatred and scorn of a world which used to be at his feet.

People are apt to smile in Austria when Linz is mentioned, for it so obviously rhymes with "Provinz." It is, indeed, a sleepy little country town, with a petty-bourgeois population mainly of rural origin, shipworkers on the Danube, handicraftsmen, poor folk for the most part, though some of the country gentry have their town houses in the place. It is not, like Prague, a city with a great and glorious tradition; it has no Opera House, no library, no theatre; it is not a town with a brilliant social life like that of the capital of Bohemia. To Fouché it can be nothing but a dreary asylum for his old age. There he settles down with, as the other members of the household, his son and two women nearly of an age, one of them his wife, and the other his daughter. He rents a fine house, and has it handsomely furnished, much to the delight of the local tradespeople, among whose customers millionaires are rare birds. Some of the residents are glad enough to make the acquaintance of this interesting foreigner, whose money, at any rate, endows him with some importance; but the titled folk draw an obvious distinction between the lady who was born Count-

ess Castellane and the son of a petty tradesman, this "Monsieur" Fouché around whose wizened shoulders a ducal mantle was first hung by Napoleon—himself a mere adventurer in their eyes. As for the members of the official class, they have received secret instructions from Vienna to have as little truck with Fouché as possible. The upshot is that he who used to be so busy and to hob-nob with all and sundry, lives a life of wellnigh complete isolation and finds himself shunned. In a volume of contemporary memoirs we read a striking pen-portrait of Fouché at a dance: "Most remarkable was the way in which the Duchess was overwhelmed with attention, while her husband was neglected. He was of middle height, strongly made though of spare build, and extremely ugly. On such occasions he always wore a blue evening coat with gold buttons, white breeches, and white stockings. As decoration he had the great Austrian Order of Leopold. For the most part he stood solitary beside the stove watching the dances. When I contemplated this man who had at one time been an all-powerful minister of the French Empire, when I noted how lonely and forsaken he was and how pleased he seemed to be if some official or other came to exchange a word with him or to ask him to play a game of chess, I could not but be reminded of the mutability of earthly power and greatness."

One thing only helps to keep his intellectual passion aflame to the last—the hope that, after all, he may yet resume a high place in the political world. Weary, worn out, failing a little both in mind and body, he still

cherishes the illusion that he, the man of multifarious services, will some day be recalled to office. Once again, as so often before, destiny will summon him from obscurity and replace him at the table where the divine game of politics is being played. Unceasingly he carries on a secret correspondence with his friends in France; indefatigably the old spider goes on spinning webs, but they remain unnoticed among the rafters at Linz. Under a pen-name he publishes a *Notice sur le Duc d'Otrante*, an anonymous panegyric which depicts his talents and his character in vivid and almost lyrical colours. At the same time, in the hope of intimidating his enemies, he states again and again in his letters that he is writing his memoirs, and even goes so far as to say that they are about to be published by Brockhaus and will be dedicated to King Louis XVIII. This is to remind those whom it may concern that the sometime Police Minister Fouché still has arrows in his quiver, and that they are poisoned. But it is strange! No one is afraid of him any longer; no one delivers him from Linz; no one thinks of sending for him; no one wants his advice or help. When the question of the recall of the exiles is raised in the French parliament, no one shows any marked interest in Fouché or speaks of him with special hatred. During the three years since he quitted the world's stage, the great actor, who excelled in so many rôles, has been forgotten. Silence has enwrapped him; there no longer exists for the general public a Duke of Otranto. There is nothing but an old man, weary, fretful, lonely, and estranged, grumbling to himself as he shambles through

the streets of Linz. Now and again some shopkeeper will greet him courteously; but, for the rest, no one in the world knows him and no one thinks of him. History, eternity's advocate, has taken a terrible revenge on the man who never thought of anything but the passing moment—has buried him alive.

So utterly forgotten is he that no one beyond a few officials in the Austrian police service pays any heed when at length, in the year 1819, Metternich allows the Duke of Otranto to remove to Triest—granting this favour only because he knows from a trustworthy source that it is accorded to a dying man. Unresting worker as he has always been, three years of inactivity have fatigued him and undermined his health more than thirty years of arduous toil. His lungs are giving out; he can no longer endure the harsh climate of the Upper Danube; and so Metternich lets him go to Triest as a sunnier place in which to die. There the broken politician may often be seen as he walks with faltering steps on his way to Mass, and then as he kneels with clasped hands. This is Joseph Fouché, who twenty-five years before had torn down the crucifixes from above the altars. Now he bows his white head before the "ridiculous emblems of superstition," and may perhaps actually feel homesick for the cloisters in which he spent his youth. He is completely changed. No longer pretentious, no longer ambitious, his one desire is to be at peace with his former enemies. The sisters and the brothers of his great adversary Napoleon, themselves likewise fallen from

power and forgotten by the world, come to visit him, and talk with him about past days. They are astonished to find that he has grown gentle in his old age. There is nothing in this pitiful shadow to remind them of the dreaded and dangerous being who for two decades had been a perennial source of trouble and had been able to browbeat the strongest. Peace is all he wants now—peace and a "good death." In very truth, during his last hours he makes his peace with his God and with men. Peace with God: for the sometime militant atheist, the persecutor of Christianity, the destroyer of altars, when December 1820 is drawing to its close summons to his bedside one of those "abominable cheats" (as he had called them in the springtime of his Jacobinism), a priest, and he piously folds his hands to receive extreme unction. Peace with men: for a few days before his death he tells his son to open his writing-desk and take out the papers which it contains. A big fire is kindled, and into this hundreds and thousands of letters are cast, together (presumably) with the much dreaded memoirs, at the thought of which many have been trembling. Is it a dying man's weakness? Is it a belated flicker of goodness? Is it dread of damnation? Is it mere indifference? Who can tell? Anyhow, on his deathbed he shows unprecedented consideration for others, and destroys all that might have compromised them, all that he might have used to wreak a posthumous vengeance upon his foes. For the first time in his life, instead of seeking fame and power, he tries to promote others' happiness, and, weary of mankind and of life, he seeks oblivion.

This strange, adventurous life begun in a northern seaport, ends on December 26th, 1820, in a southern seaport: Triest. On December 28th, the body of him whose career had been so restless is laid to its last rest. The news of the death of the famous Duke of Otranto arouses barely a flicker of curiosity. The name awakens, perhaps, a few vague associations, which, in the peaceful skies of the time, are speedily dispersed without leaving a trace.

Four years later, there is a stir of uneasiness. Rumour has it that the memoirs of the much-dreaded man are about to appear, and a cold shiver runs down the backs of many in high places, of many of those who had been too ready to trample upon him after his fall. Can it be that these lips will speak once more, from the tomb? Are the compromising documents sedulously collected by him as Minister of Police, the private letters and other scandal-freighted papers, to be brought to light at last, to the detriment of many reputations? But Fouché remains true to himself after death. The memoirs which an enterprising bookseller publishes in Paris in the year 1824 are as untrustworthy as Fouché himself. Even from the grave, he who has been so obstinately silent will not disclose all the truth. Lying under the sod, he jealously guards his secrets, that he may himself remain the greatest enigma of all, that he may continue to be a twilit figure, that his features may never be wholly revealed. But it is just because he is an enigma that we of a later day are lured into an attempt to practice that art at which he himself excelled, the art of unravelling a

mystery. That is why we have endeavoured, carefully following the spoor, to trace his perplexing and involved career, and, amid the vicissitudes of his fortune, to limn the portrait of the most remarkable politician the world has ever known.

B FOUCHE, J.
Zweig, Stefan, 1881-1942.
Joseph Fouch_e, the
portrait of a politician

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